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Letourneur, Augustin Jean, bp.

THE LITTLE MONTH

OF THE

HOLY INFANCY;

OR,

THE FIRST MYSTERIES OF THE LIFE OF

Our Lord Jesus Christ,

PROPOSED TO THE IMITATION OF YOUTH.

And Jean evêque de Verdun

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF THE ABBE LETOURNEUR, VICAR-GENERAL OF THE DIOCESE OF SOISSONS, AND DEDICATED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY OF

THE HOLY CHILDHOOD.

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

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APPROBATION.

Having examined the "Little Month of the Holy Infancy," by the Abbé Letourneur, our Vicar-General, we approve its publication, and recommend it to the youth of our Diocese.

JULIUS FR.
BISHOP OF SOISSONS AND LAON.

GIVEN AT SOISSONS,
AUG. 19, 1832.

Z.W. 23 Ap. 45

DEDICATION.

TO ALL CHRISTIAN CHILDREN,

MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD.

DEAR CHILDREN:—A priest who is devoted to your society, and who often prays for you to the Child Jesus, at the foot of the holy Altars, has conceived the design of publishing in your language, this book, which has been so useful to your little brethren in France.

Read one of the chapters occasionally, and you will see how the Infant Jesus, while apparently possessing the weaknesses of your age, went about doing good to all, even in the midst of the wicked. After shutting the book, cast a loving glance upon Jesus in the manger of Bethlehem, and say to yourself, that little Child lies upon straw. He trembles with cold, He hungers, He suffers through love of me. He will one day be nailed to the cross, and die by reason of that same love. O Jesus, be ever my guide, my protector, my friend, and my brother. Grant me the grace ever to love and serve You faithfully, O most loving Jesus!

NEW YORK, *December 4th*, 1861.

PROTEST.

In obedience to the decrees of Pope Urban the Eighth, of holy memory, we protest that we do not intend to attribute any other than merely human authority to all the miracles, visions, graces and incidents mentioned in this book, nor to the titles, holy or blessed, applied to the servants of God, not yet canonized; except in cases where these have been confirmed by the Holy Roman Catholic Church, and by the Holy Apostolic See, of whom we profess ourselves to be obedient children.

PREFACE

TO THE FRENCH EDITION.

The first mysteries, which the Son of God made man, accomplished for our salvation, offer the most touching examples and the most profound instructions for all times and conditions of life; but they are so perfectly adapted to the affections and wants, to the inclinations and duties of our earliest years, that it really seems as if the Divine Lord and Saviour of the world deigned to humble Himself, so far as to take upon Him the form of an infant, expressly to sanctify and instruct childhood. An Infant God could better make Himself understood, and, as it were, draw nearer to the hearts of children. His incomprehensible abasement would then be better suited to their simplicity, and would incite them more powerfully to the imitation of His virtues. Whilst collecting for the use of children, the precious details of His first twelve years, one cannot help thinking

that age to be called to a more abundant participation in the benefits and blessings of that adorable Infancy. It was doubtless these considerations which inspired Pope Saint Leo to utter these touching words: "Jesus Christ loved childhood, the first state of man through which He would pass. Jesus Christ loved childhood, the mistress of humility, the rule of innocence, the model of gentleness." Should they not also inspire us to dedicate to that age, so dear to our Redeemer, *the month of the Holy Infancy?* Yes, certainly, and such was our first intention; but seeing that the form of that work did not exactly answer the desired end, we thought that a course of Lectures and Practices, composed exclusively for children, would render easier for them the study of their Divine Model, and the perfection after which they should strive, by their endeavors to imitate Him; happy if our labors should contribute to develop or to strengthen in these young souls the knowledge and love of the Infant Jesus, and aid them to become faithful copies of Him, by their innocence and simplicity.

BLESSED BE GOD.

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGIN,

AIM, AND ADVANTAGES

OF THE

SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD.

In presenting this volume to the Christian public, we trust it will be neither uninteresting nor unprofitable, to make some brief remarks and reflections upon the *origin*, the *aim*, and the *advantages* of the Society of the Holy Childhood. First, as regards its *origin*. That it had its conception in devotion to the Holy Infancy of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is too obvious to need remark. Ah, how seldom do we call to mind this most admirable and affecting phase of the Incarnation! What can be more touching, than to see the great God of Heaven and Earth, the Eternal, Omnipotent Lord, under the form of a child in His Virgin Mother's arms, apparently helpless, and subject to His own creatures; suffering the ex-

tremes of cold, heat, hunger and thirst, and obedient to the parents He had Himself chosen? From the maternal immaculate bosom, does He not seem to cry out to us: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

It was this voice of the Babe of Bethlehem, that induced the late saintly De Janson Forbin, a French Bishop, to establish the truly Christian association now under consideration. He looked around the earth with the eye of his all-embracing charity, and beheld, with the most affectionate sympathy, the wretched condition of infants in pagan nations, and particularly in China. China is a vast country in Asia, having a population of 300,000,000 souls. The people are so poor, and so barbarous, that the young infants, whom they are too poor or too indolent to raise, they either strangle, or drown, or throw them out on the streets, or the highways, to die from starvation, or to be devoured by dogs, hogs, and birds of prey; in the cities and towns, the bodies of these poor little innocents are removed in carts with the common filth, with as little concern as if they were merely the carcasses of animals. The number of little children who are thus exposed and perish, is immensely great, amounting to thousands daily. The

humanizing, to say nothing of the civilizing influences of Christianity, have not yet succeeded in penetrating the masses of the depraved people of that benighted country.

It was the unhappy condition of those wretched children, deprived at once of corporal and spiritual life, that first attracted the attention of the good Bishop, and suggested to him the foundation of the work of the Holy Childhood.

Its *aim* is to procure, through the tender charity of the children of Europe and America, in fact, of all throughout Christendom, the salvation, both corporal and spiritual, of as great a number as possible of the children of China, and such other countries as are similarly circumstanced, to procure for the poor little sufferers, who are in immediate danger of death, the grace of baptism and thereby of eternal life, in honor of the amiable and affecting Infancy of our Divine Redeemer, the Babe of Bethlehem, and the Child of Nazareth.

But the object of the work is far from ending with the conferring of the Sacrament of baptism upon the dying children; it takes charge also of those who are in no such danger, in fact, of all who are exposed to perish, and after baptizing them, it attends to all their bodily and mental necessities. It clothes and educates them, procuring

nurses for them in Christian families, and founds hospitals, schools and colleges for their benefit. These children, these neophytes, thus saved and charitably provided for, become, as they grow up, missionaries and apostles of Christianity to their benighted fellow countrymen, and it must not be upposed that they forget, in their pious solicitude, that class of little perishing babes, from which they themselves have been rescued.

Oh, what innumerable blessings must not the prayers of these numerous little children, thus saved and provided for, bring down upon the heads of those, who by their alms, have enabled devoted Catholic missionaries to go to these distant countries, and in face of so many dangers, to undertake such charitable offices! But we should not omit to mention, that such is the poverty and cupidity of Chinese parents, that they will sell their children *for a few cents* each. Hence, our good Samaritans by no means confine their charitable deeds to such children as are exposed to perish, but purchase from the infidels such as they will sell, in order to rear them up for God and Heaven.

We now proceed to the consideration of some of the *advantages* of the work of the Holy Childhood, but to do full justice to this part of our

task would require many pages, if not a whole volume. These advantages are of a two-fold character—spiritual and temporal. We have already touched on those arising from it to the children of the infidel or pagan nations, let us now look nearer home, and consider those accruing therefrom, to our own children, as well as to their parents and guardians. Our Blessed Lord has said: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*," and surely we can scarcely conceive a case, in which this divine maxim is more truly and efficaciously verified, than in the one before us. Christian parents are not generally sufficiently impressed with the fact, that their duties to their dear little ones end not with teaching them their prayers and catechism—a very important, or rather more important duty requires to be discharged, namely—to teach them active charity; and can this charity, by which we mean their prayers and alms, be extended to objects more deserving of compassion, than the little babes of China?

The annals of the Holy Childhood furnish us with innumerable instances of the most heroic and affecting infantile charity in behalf of the little abandoned Chinese. Indeed, it is one of those instances in which the adage is verified, that "truth is stranger than fiction." Have we erred

in styling that heroic charity, which induces a child to give his most precious possessions for the salvation of others, whom he has never seen, especially when we remember, that selfishness and avarice are usually very predominant features in the character of the young?

A correspondent of the *Annals* writes—"A little girl, aged six years, of the province of St. Brieuc, receives every morning a piece of dry bread and a cent to buy apples to eat therewith. One day she came to the class beaming with joy, and said, giving a cent to her teacher, 'Here is something for the little Chinese, and every day I will give as much.' 'Where did you get this cent?' asked the sister. 'From my mother,' answered the child; 'she is so good to me. I will eat my bread dry every day until I have completed my twelve cents.' The child, as the editor was informed, continued her generous little sacrifice daily. On the first day of the year she received a cent for a New Year's gift; this she hastened to give also to her 'dear little Chinese.'"

Here is another charming example. "A little boy aged five years, refused to touch the dinner to which his father had helped him; 'I will eat no dinner to-day,' said the child, 'I want to have it sent to the poor little Chinese.'"

But the following incident appears to us to be singularly touching. What mother could resist the captivating eloquence with which love alone could inspire a poor little girl? "The young Matilda vainly begged her mother to enroll her in the society of the Holy Childhood; she exhausted all the means she could think of, without success. 'Mother,' said she one day, 'don't you know that the children I would buy would go straight to Heaven —and that I also would go to heaven, because they would pray for me to our God?' This appeal was fruitless. But the child was not discouraged. Finally, one day she said to her: 'Wait, mamma, and imagine to yourself that this country is China, and that the greedy hogs are going to devour dear little brother; oh, would you not be glad to have some one purchase him?' At these words, the mother became overpowered with emotion, and could no longer resist the earnest petition of the amiable child who had found the way to her maternal heart."

So capable of awakening the most tender emotions, and enkindling the fire of charity, has this work of the Holy Childhood been to some souls in Europe and elsewhere, that many persons who have no children themselves, have been known to practice great self-denial, and to increase their

labor and their economy, in order to spare something for the funds of the Society, by becoming honorary members, and thus participating in its manifold blessings. Thus we see seamstresses, and servants, poor laborers and mechanics, zealously and joyfully contending who should be foremost in giving it aid. Oh! read the Annals, and you will not be surprised at their devotedness, but will hasten to become a member yourself. How could it be otherwise when we reflect that a Chinese child may be bought for *five cents*! Verily there is in this consideration, something that should move us, and make us ashamed of our own inconsiderateness and want of humanity, as well as charity. And those who have at heart the conversion of China and other Infidel nations, can they refuse both prayers and material aid to this Institution, which is so powerful an auxiliary to the magnificent and Catholic work of the Propagation of the Faith.

We will now proceed to notice some of the advantages which accrue to the parents and guardians of the members of the Society, and first, we would ask—what can be more consoling to Christian parents, than to see their little ones joyfully bestowing their labors and dearest treasures, on objects of charity, and in honor of the sweet Babe

of Bethlehem? If we admire and praise this charity in the children of others, must it not, in a tenfold degree gladden us when it is done by our own offspring? Ah! truly "charity blesseth doubly, him who giveth, and him who receiveth." Joy is in some sense contagious, our children can scarcely be penetrated by it, without a portion of it reverting to ourselves, and surely, no joy in this commonly joyless life, can be purer than that to which we have alluded. The Annals furnish us with many instances of the industrious charity of the young zealots in this cause. Some would work for a longer time than usual, some would be more sparing of their clothes, some would deny themselves not alone the luxuries, but even almost the necessaries of life, in order to save the monthly cent for the redemption of little pagans. In France especially, what an affecting sight for the eyes of pious parents, must it not be to see their little girls working so assiduously at embroidering or making quilts for the benefit of those whom they call *their god children*, for so may be justly styled in a certain sense, those children who are rescued from eternal death by their charitable exertions.

One feature in the good work, is the wonderful effect it has in reforming children from confirmed bad habits and vices; such as lying, cursing, swear-

ing, idleness, drowsiness, etc., all accomplished by the promise of giving them a cent a month, for the poor perishing little Chinese. Nay, through its means, many children have been induced to learn their prayers and catechism in less than one-fourth the time that would otherwise be required, and all this, and more of a similar character, for the promised reward of the monthly cent. Is not all this of equal, if not greater benefit to the parents? We need not stop to answer.

The social advantages which must result to parents from the exercise of the various functions connected with the work, must be very considerable. In the first place, it will naturally bring their children into society with other pious children, and the reunions—these happy reunions of its members, which have evenings without weariness, and mornings without sadness, will be strongly calculated to cement an everlasting esteem and friendship among them; this must next pass to the parents, and may, and no doubt often does, in many cases, lead to great temporal advantages for the whole family.

The association also calls into action the joyful and charitable industry of numberless young minds in devising and executing, with the most exquisite taste and skill, articles for the fairs and lotteries, for

the benefit of the poor deserted heathen children. Experience and history confirm the fact, that it is only the inspirations of religion, or of her brightest ornament—charity—that has produced the most beautiful and rarest specimens of art; witness as only one instance—the cathedrals of Christendom, with their inimitable paintings and sculpture. How else could it be, when we work solely for our most amiable and good God and Redeemer. And can our children in their turn take an active part in such good works, without having their artistic and creative faculties much cultivated and strengthened? Assuredly not.

The family roof itself even, receives its share of the universal blessings this charitable association is so well calculated to impart. Many families have had their ways of living ameliorated, and found comfort replace former want, owing to the impulse given to their industry and economy, in order to be enabled to give their dear little children the monthly cent for the Society of the Holy Childhood! The same thought has led many persons to leave off useless, and perhaps, in many cases, pernicious superfluities—in finery, dress, furniture, the luxuries of the table, and in many other ways, to gratify the laudable importunities of their children, on behalf of the suffering Chinese.

But the chief utility of the work is, to guide and assist parents in the Christian education of their children. It is in that respect both suggestive and practical. It is a consoling feature in the history of our Holy Mother, the Church, that God, ever watchful in her regard, always provides her with institutions calculated to suit the wants of the time. Is not this institution of the Holy Childhood, in our own days, an exemplification of His vigilant providence? We live in an age when much labor and care are bestowed on material and other perishable worldly interests, whilst "the one thing necessary" is neglected or almost forgotten. Nor do we go too far, in saying, that the society of the Holy Childhood is, perhaps more than all others, calculated to render the Christian culture of children at once easy and pleasant. Indeed, it may justly be styled a kind of *Piety made easy.*

The mother happy enough to comprehend the treasure included in this work, will hasten to enroll in the list of the associates, her child yet unborn, with the intention of its having part in the graces of the visitation of the Blessed Virgin, preluding by the charity bestowed for the sanctification of the children of strangers, the grace of baptism, which she then efficaciously implores for her own infant.

As soon as the child becomes aware of his existence, he will learn from his mother that he has a Father in Heaven: that that all-powerful Father has given him a brother, who is His eternal son, and also the son of the blessed and immaculate Virgin Mary, that this sweet brother wishes to share all things with him—His merits, His throne, His kingdom, etc. "And you, my child, what will you give in return to the Infant Jesus? Your heart, yes, your whole heart. But what more? Other hearts still; you will give Him all that He has come to seek on earth, in becoming a little child, like yourself. He is so great and powerful, that every thing that exists—the resplendent sun, the beautiful moon, the charming flowers, the whole world—has been the work of His hands; and yet, He has made Himself little, He has chosen to become poor, to suffer and to weep. What does he weep for? For hearts to love Him? Will you not give him yours without reserve?"

These considerations must remind the child of his own dignity, and have the same effect upon the mother also, as well as recall to her memory the duties she owes her offspring. Among other things she will say to him: "I have a secret to tell you if you will be prudent. Mamma will cause your name to be enrolled in a book, in which

are inscribed the names of the cherished little ones of the Infant Jesus. She will give twelve cents yearly in your name, in honor of the twelve years of the infancy of Jesus Christ, in order that they may be employed in purchasing Chinese babes to be given to Him by baptism." How pleasing this will be to the child, and when she reminds him that thus he becomes, as it were, a little father himself, and begets little children for the sweet Infant of Bethlehem, who expect from his exertions, food, clothing, and education, he will, doubtless, be encouraged to make noble sacrifices in their favor. As he grows older, he will give her constant opportunities to instil into his youthful mind, the sacred precepts of religion and practical piety. He can now be easily taught his prayers, catechism, habits of order, industry, economy, study, mildness toward his brothers and sisters, to shun evil company, etc., and his mother will find him fully realizing her fondest hopes.

We will conclude these reflections with a beautiful thought on the subject, which we translate from the *Annals*. It of course applies to the mother who has duly enrolled her children in the society, and discharged all her other duties toward them. "Valiant woman, object of the promises of the Holy Ghost, enjoy in peace your

modest glory; it will be no impediment to your piety, it will embalm the house of your husband, it will be the light and example of your neighbors, and your peaceable home will become as a sanctuary, where you will experience a foretaste of the happiness of the Saints in Heaven."

THE LITTLE MONTH

OF

THE HOLY INFANCY.

PRELIMINARY LECTURE.

Motives and Practices of this Devotion.

BEFORE engaging in the practices of *the Month of the holy Infancy* of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is proper, my dear children, that you should form a just idea of this devotion, which may perhaps be quite new to you. We are never much interested in things which we do not clearly understand, nor can we follow with zeal and perseverance, even the easiest practices, if we do not fully appreciate their merits and advantages. Besides this, it is important for you, early to learn the good policy of neither receiving nor rejecting any thing without examination and reflection. This habit will preserve you from many mistakes, and consequently from numerous regrets. You have, it is

true, nothing to fear from reading this little book, which I now offer to your piety, nor in the accomplishment of these religious practices, perfectly conformable to the spirit of the Church, and marked with the seal of her authority. But you will not become permanently attached to them if you have not carefully studied, and as it were, closely considered Him who is the object thereof. Finally, my dear children, do not be alarmed by the length of time consecrated to the honor of *the Holy Infancy*. I know, that at your age, a month, each day of which is devoted to a religious exercise, may seem interminable. But you will clearly understand that you are not called upon to interrupt either your studies, your labors, or even your ordinary amusements, but simply to give daily one quarter of an hour's attention to the short explanation of a mystery equally instructive and consoling. It is a collection of charming pictures which Faith places before your eyes; and the subjects, which will be represented therein, are so perfectly adapted to your age, that they will speak at once to your minds and hearts. You cannot calculate the favorable impressions and the happy effects they may have upon your thoughts and affections, nor the influence these meditations and practices, simple as they are, may exercise over your conduct.

When you see a God who, not content with taking upon Himself our miserable nature, has chosen, in order to instruct and to draw us to Himself, to pass through all the stages of childhood, do you not feel impelled to approach Him, to listen to His teaching, and to study the glorious examples He gives you? Do not His virtues, which shone with so pure and mild a lustre during the first years of His life on earth, enkindle in you the desire to reproduce some of their features, to show forth in your actions and sentiments even some faint image or shadow of them? Finally, does not the unbounded love of which each of His first steps in His long career of humiliation and sorrow has, so to speak, left an indelible impression, penetrate deeply into your hearts, and cause you to experience the desire to respond to it in some sort by your tender love and generosity? Such are the pious sentiments with which you should ardently beg the Infant Jesus to fill your hearts, since the principal end of the *Month* which you are about to commence, is to enable you to enter more fully into the knowledge, the emulation, and the love of the Infant Jesus, and upon the faithful accomplishment of the duties the perfect model of which you will find in the first twelve years of His earthly life.

In order to attain to so desirable an end, I am about to propose some practices to your piety, my dear children; if you cannot follow them all, you may choose those which please you most, or which may be best suited to your condition in life.

1st. Offer to the Infant Jesus, not only the different acts of piety by which you wish to honor Him during this month, but also your actions and ordinary occupations. That will be a fresh motive for you to endeavor to acquit yourselves of them in a manner more agreeable to God and more meritorious for yourselves.

2d. Renew this offering each morning, either upon awaking or at the end of your prayers.

3d. If possible, assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, daily.

4th. Prepare yourselves to sanctify this *Month* by the frequentation of the Sacraments.

5th. In order to profit by the daily meditation endeavor to recollect yourselves before commencing, and seek to draw down the Holy Ghost into your souls, by fervent prayer.

6th. Do not omit the daily recital of the Litany of the Holy Infancy, or that of the Saints who were devoted to it; but, except in case of absolute necessity, never omit the lecture nor the col-

loquy with the Infant Jesus, nor the little chaplet. God grants His favors and blessings to exactitude and perseverance.

7th. Propose as the special object of your demands, the virtue which you know to be most necessary, and examine your consciences each night upon the vice which is most opposed to it; take good resolutions for the following day; express your loving regrets to the Infant Jesus, and go to sleep pronouncing His blessed name.

8th. Finally, revive your devotion toward, and your confidence in, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, and beg them to obtain for you the grace to enter into the spirit of the mysteries of the Holy Infancy, to the participation of which they were admitted in so privileged a manner.

LITANY OF THE INFANT JESUS.

Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.
Infant Jesus, hear us.
Infant Jesus, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven,
God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God the Holy Ghost,
Holy Trinity, one God,
Infant Jesus,
Infant, very God,
Have mercy on us.

Infant, Son of the living God,
Infant, Son of the Virgin Mary,
Infant, begotten before the morning star,
Infant, Word made Flesh,
Infant, Wisdom of thy Father,
Infant, Purity of thy Mother,
Infant, only Son of thy Father,
Infant, First-born of thy Mother,
Infant, Image of thy Father,
Infant, Creator of thy Mother,
Infant, Splendor of thy Father,
Infant, Honor of thy Mother,
Infant, equal to thy Father,

Have mercy on us.

Infant, subject to thy Mother,
Infant, Joy of thy Father,
Infant, Riches of thy Mother,
Infant, Gift of thy Father,
Infant, Offering of thy Mother,
Infant, precious fruit of a Virgin,
Infant, Creator of man,
Infant, Power of God,
Infant, our God,
Infant, our Brother,
Infant, perfect man from thy Conception,
Infant, ancient in wisdom from thy childhood,
Infant, Father of ages,
Infant of days,
Infant giving life, and nourished at the breast,

Have mercy on us.

Infant, Eternal Word, and making thyself dumb,
Infant, weeping in the crib,
Infant, thundering in the heavens,
Infant, Terror of Hell,
Infant, joy of Paradise,
Infant, dreaded by tyrants,
Infant, desired by the Magi,
Infant, exiled from thy people,
Infant, King in exile,
Infant, Destroyer of idols,
Infant, Vindicator of the glory of God,
Infant, strong in weakness,
Infant, powerful in abasement,
Infant, Treasure of Grace,

Have mercy on us.

Infant, Fountain of love,
Infant, Author of the blessings of heaven,
Infant, Repairer of the evils of earth,
Infant, Head of the Angels,
Infant, Stem of the Patriarchs,
Infant, Word of the Prophets,
Infant, Expectation of nations,
Infant, joy of the shepherds,
Infant, Light of the Magi,
Infant, Salvation of children,
Infant, Hope of the Just,
Infant, Teacher of Doctors,
Infant, First-fruits of the Saints,

Have mercy on us.

Be merciful,
Spare us, O Infant Jesus.
Be merciful,
Graciously hear us, O Infant Jesus.
From the bondage of the children of Adam,
From the slavery of the devil,
From the corruption of the world,
From the lust of the flesh,
From the pride of life,
From an immoderate desire of knowledge,
From blindness of mind,
From perversity of will,
From our sins,
Through thy most pure Conception,

Infant Jesus, deliver us.

Through thy most humble birth,
Through thy Tears,
Through thy most painful Circumcision,
Through thy most glorious Epiphany,
Through thy most devout Presentation,
Through thy most innocent conversation in the world,
Through thy most holy Life,
Through thy Poverty,
Through thy Sorrows,
Through thy Labors and Travails,
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Spare us, O Infant Jesus.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,

Infant Jesus, deliver us.

Graciously hear us, O Infant Jesus.

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,

Have mercy on us, O Infant Jesus.

Infant Jesus, hear us.

Infant Jesus, graciously hear us.

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus, who didst vouchsafe so to annihilate the greatness of thy Incarnation, Divinity, and most Sacred Humanity, as to be born in time, and become a little child; grant that we may acknowledge Infinite wisdom in the silence of a child. Power in weakness, majesty in abasement; so that, adoring thy humiliations on earth, we may contemplate thy glories in Heaven. Who with the Father and Holy Ghost livest and reignest, God forever and ever. Amen.

LITANY OF THE SAINTS,

Who were devoted to the Infancy of our Lord, or who suffered martyrdom in childhood.

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Jesus, hear us.
Jesus, graciously hear us.
God, the Father of Heaven,
God, the Son, Redeemer of the world,
God, the Holy Ghost,
Holy Trinity, one God,
Holy Mary,
Holy Mother of God,
Holy Virgin of Virgins,
Saint Michael,
Saint Gabriel,
Saint Raphael,
Holy Angels and Arch-Angels,
All ye Holy Orders of Blessed Spirits,
Saint Abraham,
Saint David,
Saint Isaias,
Saint John Baptist,
Saint Joseph,
Saint Joachim,
Saint Zachary,
All ye Holy Patriarchs and Prophets,
Holy Shepherds,
Holy Magian Kings,
Saint Simeon,
All ye Holy Innocents,
Saint Celsus, of Antioch,
Saint Celsus of Milan,
Saint Modestus,

Have mercy on us.

Pray for us.

Pray for us.

Saint Ammonius,
Saint Pergentinus,
Saint Laurentius,
Saint Claud,
Saint Hypatius,
Saint Paul,
Saint Dionysius,
Saint Sancus,
Saint Quiricius,
Saint Pelagius,
Saint Justin,
Saint Pastor,
Saint Raphinus,
Saint Sylvanus,
Saint Vitalis,
Saint Crescentius,
Saint Flocellers,
Saint Paulinus,
Saint Barula,
All ye Holy Martyrs,
Saint Leo,
Saint John Chrysostom,
Saint Augustine,
Saint Jerome,
Saint Anthony, of Padua,

Pray for us.

Saint Francis,
Saint Thomas, of Villanosa,
Saint Stanislaus Kotska,
All ye holy Pontiffs and Confessors,
Saint Anne, Grandmother of the Infant Jesus,
Saint Elizabeth,
Saint Anna, the Prophetess,
Saint Agnes,
Saint Eulalia,
Saint Eutropia,
Saint Acquilla,
Saint Emerentiana,
Saint Secunda,
Saint Julia,
Saint Basilissa,
Saint Paula,
Saint Eustachium,
Saint Helena,
Saint Theresa,
Saint Gertrude,

Pray for us.

Saint Catharine, of Sienna,
All ye holy Virgins and Widows,
Holy Infant Martyrs,
All ye holy men and women, Saints of God,
Pray for us.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world,
Graciously hear us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world.
Have mercy on us, O Lord.
Jesus, hear us.
Jesus, graciously hear us.

Let us pray.

O God, who by the admirable effects of your grace in strengthening the faith and constancy of their most tender years against the perfidious caresses of the enemy of salvation and the frightful menaces of his cruelty, has enabled little children to withstand the most severe torments and to triumph over tyrants, grant us, we beseech you, by their intercession, obedience to your precepts and fidelity in your service, in order that neither the secret snares of the devil, nor the violence of his fury, may ever have the power to separate us from you, who livest and reignest world without end. Amen.

INVOCATIONS,

To the first adorers of the Infant Jesus.

Holy Angels, who formed the Court of the Infant Jesus, and served Him during the entire period of His Infancy,
Pray for us.

Holy Angels, who announced to the Shepherds the birth of the Infant Jesus, and who adored Him weeping in His manger,
Pray for us.

Holy Magian Kings, who led by a star, came from the East to adore the Infant Jesus and offer to Him gifts,
Pray for us.

Holy Shepherds, who at the news announced by the Angels, hastened to the stable to adore the Infant Jesus,
Pray for us.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY INFANT JESUS.

Most amiable Jesus, God and King of Angels and of men, from the depths of my own nothingness, I recognize your infinite grandeur in the littleness of a child, and adore you with my whole heart and soul, as the Word made Flesh, as our

all-powerful God, as our Liberator reduced to the slavery from which He has freed us, the longer you remain upon earth, the more incomprehensible you become; and in coming forth from your mother's womb, you add a new secret to those already hidden in the bosom of your Father. You come into the world, and yet you abide in Heaven; you show yourself to all flesh, and yet you hide yourself from every spirit; you are equally infinite and incomprehensible to men, whether you are born in time as a child, or whether you equal your Father in eternity: I adore you, and give myself to you, as at once concealed, and yet unveiled in these two ineffable mysteries. You are a hidden God, but in this nothingness I find all. You are poor, but in you I see all my treasure. You weep, but you are my consolation and happiness. Scarcely born, you seek after death, but you are my eternal life. You, who livest and reignest with God the Father, in unity with the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY.

Arrival of the Holy Family at Bethlehem.

You know, my dear child, that after Adam had sinned, a Redeemer was promised to him. It was on the very day of his fall, that God said to his tempter, who was hidden under the form of a serpent: *I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head.* That is to say, of the woman shall be born a Son who will destroy thy empire. This Son promised by God, this liberator and deliverer, is Jesus Christ. The Patriarchs successively transmitted this blessed promise to their descendants. The prophets, who after them were charged to announce His coming, were not satisfied with indicating merely some of the marks and characteristics by which He might be recognized, they describe in the most particular manner the time, place, and circumstances under which He was to appear, the prodigies of His conception and birth, His humiliations and His grandeurs, His miracles and His sufferings, and finally His death and glorious resurrection. The importance of His divine mission, moreover, required that His person should not be

liable to be mistaken, nor His titles reasonably contested!

As you advance, dear child, in the study of religion, you will discover, to your great consolation, that if the marks and characteristics of the Messiah could not have been traced with more clearness and exactitude, they could not, on the other hand, apply more directly nor exclusively to our Lord Jesus Christ; so much so, that the holy men, raised up by God to announce them, seem rather to relate facts already happened, than to predict those to come, and should be styled His historians, instead of His prophets. But you will admire still more the means by which Providence caused the will of men, though seemingly most opposite to His intentions, to co-operate in the execution of His impenetrable designs, and the facility with which He triumphed over all obstacles. Consider the manner in which were verified the two prophecies relative to the family from which the Messiah was to spring, and the place where he was to be born, and say, could their literal accomplishment be more clearly proven?

The prophets had announced that the Messiah should not only be of the race of *Abraham;* but also *of the house and family of David.* The place of His birth had also been not less clearly desig-

nated in their predictions. *Out of Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, shall come forth the Ruler of Israel.* It was not enough that these prophecies should be fulfilled in Him who called Himself the Messiah, it was necessary that they should be as clear and indubitable as they certainly were. Behold, therefore, how God, who directs and orders all things, even when He seems least active, obliged Joseph, who was living quietly at Nazareth, and had no intention of leaving that city, to make a journey to Bethlehem, with his spouse, at the precise time when she was to give birth to her Son. I will relate to you the manner in which the rulers of the earth were constrained to accomplish the prophecy, which indicated the birthplace, as well as pointed out the royal descent of the Saviour of the World.

"*And it came to pass that in those days, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled*, that is to say, the whole Roman empire, whose limits extended over all parts of the then known world. *This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria; and all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph, also, went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he*

was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his spouse." "Thus," says Bossuet, "through a vain and political motive, men put the whole world in motion, and God makes their human views serve for the accomplishment of His designs. His Son was to be born in Bethlehem, the humble city of David, so his prophets had predicted more than seven hundred years before; and behold the whole universe in agitation to accomplish the prophecy. Its origin is fully attested by the public registers. The Roman empire testifies to the royal descent of Jesus Christ; and Cæsar, when he least thinks of it, executes the orders of God."

Consider well, dear child, this marvellous chain of Divine Providence. A Redeemer is promised to mankind from the first ages of the world. This promise is renewed to all the Patriarchs, and always with the same precision, and in the same words. The Prophets, who next take their place in the midst of the people of God, to recall it to their minds, describe, each in their turn, the characters and features by which He could be recognized. The time and circumstances they have marked for His coming, have at length arrived. You will, perhaps, think that the privileged nation in the midst of which He is to be born, are im-

patiently awaiting the great event; that the Doctors of the Law, who hold in their hands the oracles announcing it, seek with pious solicitude for all that may enlighten them regarding its near approach. But you deceive yourself; the people are only occupied with the synagogue, the Doctors do not even think of examining the Holy Writings in which His coming is clearly foretold. How then will this *Desired of all nations* manifest Himself to the world, since the people who possess the divine promises treat them with so great indifference and, such criminal neglect? Will not the humble condition of Mary and Joseph render the cloud which covers Him still more impenetrable?

Console yourself, dear child, God keeps ever in reserve for the accomplishment of His designs, means which the skill of man could never divine; and it is doubtless for that very reason that it comes so hard to them to believe in them. Neither the obscure condition of Mary and Joseph; the carelessness and forgetfulness of the Jews; nor the silence and politic caution of the Doctors of the Law, could prevent the Incarnate Light from shining and spreading His splendor abroad, and by ways as deep in reality as they are simple and natural in appearance, all events and wills conduce to the manifestation of the Messiah. Thus, it was

necessary that His descent from David should be clearly proven. An unforeseen order obliges each of the inhabitants of Judea, as well as all persons subject to the Roman power, to be enrolled in his native city; *and Joseph being of the house and family of David, went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child. And when they were there, her days were accomplished that she should be delivered, and she brought forth her first-born Son.* Thus His parentage, His royal descent, His birth at the time and in the place marked out by the Prophets, are verified in an unimpeachable manner, and so clearly that, as soon as He appears, no one can help crying out: *This is truly the God whom we expected; He it is who will save us.*

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the denial He experienced in Bethlehem.

The Christian Child.—You are about to come into the world, O Incarnate Word! All the events and figures relative to Your advent are accomplished; all the marks and characters by which we were to recognize You, have been successively foretold by the prophets; we have only to collect

them together and behold Your Divine portrait. It is as impossible to apply them to any other being, as to mistake them in Your person. Appear, then, O Emanuel! You who are the desire and hope of the earth! Appear, and we shall be saved.

The Infant Jesus.—Here I am, my child, the hour set apart by my Father for man's redemption has arrived. I long to deliver him from the darkness of sin and the slavery of his passions, and to bring him back to holiness, charity, and truth. But, alas! men are far from realizing the shame and danger of their present state! They do not, even in thought, apply to their Deliverer; they will not even receive Him at His birth; and from the first moment of His life, the Son of Man will not have where to lay His head.

The Christian Child.—O God, about to come into the world! let not their blindness and hardness of heart hinder the designs of Your love! their great insensibility is the sad effect of that sin which You are coming to destroy. If it renders them unworthy of Your benefits, it is always worthy of Your mercy to grant them to them. No, all hearts are not closed to You! Mine, weak and little as it is, belongs to You, Divine Jesus! do not disdain to enter into it!

The Infant Jesus.—My child, your invitation

touches me deeply, because the sentiment which inspires it is sincere. However, have I not frequently touched at the door of that very heart; have I not often earnestly entreated it to open itself to my love, and give itself entirely to me; to me, who alone can render it truly happy! And have not pride, sensuality, and idleness combined together to say to me: There is no room here for you; or, even were I momentarily received, was I not quickly forced to take my departure. Is that heart changed. Must I still encounter the same humiliations and outrages?

The Christian Child.—What a sorrowful remembrance, dearest Lord! is my past hardness of heart and inconstancy! Why can I not blot out from among the number of my days, those in which I had the misfortune to be unfaithful to You! *Forget, I beseech You, the faults of my youth, and my sins of ignorance: come and take up your abode in my soul: teach me in the way of truth, and direct me, because You are my God!*

PRACTICE.

Desire to receive Jesus Christ.

PRAYER.

Divine Infant! do not delay to take birth in my soul. I long to establish You as its master.

Purify it—banish from it all vain desires and disorderly affections: plant Your virtues therein. Teach it to love nothing but what You love, and to seek nothing but what will lead it to imitate Your glorious example. Let my happiness, during this month, consist in contemplating, blessing, and invoking You, in order that, formed by Your lessons, instructed and sanctified by the mysteries of Your holy infancy, I may attach myself to You closely, both for time and for eternity. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

It is related by Bollandius, that the Most Holy Mary appeared one day to the Blessed Collette, whilst she was praying to her to intercede for sinners; and that she showed her her Infant Son, all torn and cut to pieces. "My daughter," she said, "have compassion on me, and on my Son; behold, how sinners treat him!"

MEDITATION.

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

The Birth of Jesus Christ.

WHAT joy, what happiness pervades the whole earth! What has happened to cause it, my dear child? What is the happy event which sheds so

striking an air of gladness and delight over Christmas day? Why is the joy renewed each year, as if the cause which gave rise to it eighteen hundred years ago, dated only from yesterday? The reason is, that the effects of it are perpetuated from age to age, and will last until the end of time. Although the greater number of men show themselves little touched by the inestimable blessing of the Incarnation, nevertheless they receive the fruits thereof; and when passion and frivolity give place to reflection, they are forced to recognize them; and the blessed anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ has more or less influence upon the most thoughtless souls, recalling to their minds that a Saviour came down from Heaven to bring them pardon and grace. Rejoice, therefore, dearest child, with all the other children of the Church; rejoice at the good news she announces to you, of the birth of the Divine Liberator so long and anxiously expected.

In order fully to understand the lawfulness of this joy, you must recall to mind all that you have already learned regarding the profound ignorance and corruption of human nature, and its powerlessness to quit that sad state, when the Son of God deigned to appear upon earth. The first pages of Sacred History have taught you of the creation

of mankind, of the light and holiness with which God's goodness encircled him, of his revolt, and of the terrible punishment which it brought upon Adam and all his posterity. You have, doubtless, remarked with what severity the weight of it has fallen upon human nature. Who could avoid being struck by the contemplation of the thick darkness and terrible errors into which it was drawn from its very origin? As the world went on, forgetfulness of God, cruelty and all other vices and crimes grew and increased with fearful rapidity, and so completely perverted the hearts and minds of men, that they made for themselves idols and worshipped them. Can you conceive, dear child, so humiliating a frenzy, so prodigious a degradation? Beings created to the image and likeness of God, prostrating themselves before unclean beasts; reasonable creatures trembling before the works of their own hands. Hearts formed for virtue adoring monsters! Still the facts are undeniable. During four thousand years thick darkness covered the universe, and all men, according to the expression of the Holy Scriptures, *remained seated in the darkness and shadows of death.* They would still have remained plunged therein, if their outraged Creator had not taken pity upon His creatures; for no earthly power was able to deliver

them from their fallen state. "But," says one of the first Apologists of Christianity (St. Justin Martyr), "when the corruption of man had reached its climax; when it was evident that death was the only recompense of sin; when the time had come in which God was to manifest His power and goodness, He gave His Son as the price of our redemption. Who, in fact, but the Son of God Himself could effect the justification of men, guilty and impious as they were?"

Is it not just, therefore, dear child, for us to rejoice and celebrate with canticles of joy and thanksgiving this birthday of our Saviour, since it brings us so many blessings? We were enemies of God, He came to reconcile us to Himself; we were banished from Heaven, He came to open its portals to us; we were slaves of sin and subject to the most shameful passions, He came to restore us to holiness and truth. And remark, my dear child, how, from the first moment of His birth, He offers us the only remedy which can cure us; for He not only purposed to repair the outrage sin had offered to God, and to restore to us our rights to the heavenly inheritance, but He wished, above all, to reform our corrupt nature; and by raising us from our deep humiliation, render us worthy of our new adoption; and because pride, love of

pleasure, and attachment to earthly things, had turned men aside from the true end of their creation, He wished, from the first moment of His life, to bring them back to it by the most striking of all lessons, the authority of His example. He was born in loneliness, poverty and suffering; and never was cradle more surrounded by contempt, privation, and sorrow. The destitution of the manger, His moans and tears, and the simplicity of His first worshippers, teach us clearly the vanity of riches, rank, and worldly satisfactions, and call upon us to practise humility, self-denial, and penance. Whilst thanking the Infant Jesus to-day, for deigning to take flesh upon Him through love of you, beg Him to give you some share in the precious gifts which He brought into the world, and in those sublime virtues of which His Divine Infancy will offer you the most perfect examples.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the obscurity and poverty of His birth.

The Child.—O Almighty God! O Sovereign Master of the Universe! how shall I celebrate Your mercy and goodness? You have not only deigned to unite Your divinity to our miserable nature, but even to descend upon earth and live among us! Will not all hearts be filled with joy on this happy

day of Your birth, and burst out into songs of praise and thanksgiving? But why, dearest Jesus, did You choose to be born in such poverty and to take upon You the form of an infant?

THE INFANT JESUS.—It was my love for men that led me to overstep the immense distance which separated me from their state and induced me to take flesh upon me. It was to win their love that I became an infant. But alas! the hardness of the human heart! Alas! its truly great insensibility! so great a sacrifice could neither touch nor move it; men did not know how to love their God, lying in a manger and weeping over their sins.

THE CHILD.—It is but too true, dearest Lord! that men have shown and still show themselves quite unworthy of Your love. But permit me to say, O my loving Jesus! all hearts are not closed against gratitude; and mine, in spite of its many infidelities burns to make reparation to You for such great forgetfulness and contempt.

THE INFANT JESUS.—The good dispositions of your heart, dear child, is the effect of my grace and affection for you; consequently it is precious in my eyes; but this passing emotion is far from those supernatural affections which I wish to find in my disciples, and which will animate them to

imitate my example and to practice the virtues of my childhood.

THE CHILD.—But, dear Jesus! when You deign to give them all, have You not the right to require all from Your poor creatures?

THE INFANT JESUS.—True, my child! I have given all, since I gave myself for the salvation of men, since I only ask for the sacrifice of perishable goods which can never render them happy. I impose nothing upon them which I have not previously undertaken, and yet that it is which estranges them from my service. They fear to walk in the footsteps of a God born in poverty, suffering, and tears. Answer me truly now, has not the desire of riches, honors, and pleasure, already penetrated into your soul?

THE CHILD.—Alas, too often, my poor suffering and humble Lord! too often already my rising desires have been opposed to Your adorable example. But I will stifle them and imitate You. I will no longer sigh after those riches which You rejected, nor after earthly rank which You despised, nor after those pleasures over which You wept. Divine Infant, strengthen in my heart these dispositions which You have placed there, and do not suffer any thing to separate me from You.

PRACTICE.

Unite yourself to the virtues practised by the Infant Jesus at His birth.

PRAYER.

Sweet and amiable Infant Jesus, how it confuses me to see myself so far removed from Your spirit and virtues! Grant me, I beseech You, this grace, that Your obedience may be henceforth the principle of my conduct, and the rule of all the actions of my life. Teach me to become humble at the sight of Your lowliness, poor in view of Your destitution, patient in view of Your sufferings, penitent at the sight of Your tears. You came down from the throne of Your glory to the dust of the earth, in order to unite Yourself to me; draw me from the earth up to Your throne, to unite me with You forever. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

It is related in the chronicles of the Cistercians, that a certain monk of Brabant, who was travelling on Christmas night, as he passed through a forest heard a cry as it were of a new-born infant. He approached the place whence he heard the cries, and saw a beautiful infant in the middle of the snow, who was crying and trembling with the

cold. Moved to compassion, the monk dismounted immediately from his horse, and approaching the infant, said: "O my child, how is it that you are thus abandoned to weep and die in the midst of this snow?" And he heard a voice answer him: "Alas! how can I help crying, whilst I see myself thus abandoned by all, and that no one receives me or has compassion upon me?" And having said this, he disappeared, giving us to understand that he was our Redeemer, who by this vision meant to reprove the ingratitude of men, who having seen Him born for their sake in a stable, leave Him to cry there without even pitying Him.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXVI. OF DECEMBER.

Joy of the Blessed Virgin at the Birth of Jesus Christ.

Since you sincerely love the Infant Jesus, dear child, and earnestly desire to honor the first mysteries of His Incarnation, you cannot be indifferent toward Our Blessed Lady; and your piety must lead you to desire to offer your congratulations to that privileged Creature, whom your Divine Re-

deemer chose as His Mother. Certainly, if His happy birth caused such lively transports of delight among the choirs of angels, what ineffable joy must have filled the soul of His Glorious Mother, when she was enabled to contemplate the *Desired of All Nations*, and to feast her eyes and heart, at leisure, with the sight of her dear and adorable Son! It was not merely as a daughter of Abraham that she was ravished to have before her eyes that Messiah whom the Father of the Faithful had so ardently longed to see, it was also as a mother; and thus zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, united itself to her maternal feelings, in order to fill up the measure of her happiness.

Have you ever considered, dear child, what must have been the sorrow of just souls, under the old law, at the sight of idolatry extending its ravages among all people and nations of the earth, and banishing the knowledge and love of the true God from among them? You may judge of it by the sad feeling you experience in beholding those children who, neglected by their parents and given up to their own evil inclination, not only are ignorant of the name of God their Creator, but even in the age of innocence itself, are already perverted by guilt. Therefore, with what sighs and lively

desires did the Patriarchs look forward to the *Deliverer of Nations!* You can form some idea of it from those ardent prayers and pressing invocations which the Church so solemnly utters during the days which precede the birth of Jesus Christ: *O Lord and Leader of the House of Israel!* she cries; *O Root of Jesse! Thou who art as a Standard raised on high to gather all people together, before whom kings keep silence, come to deliver us; hasten, do not delay.* If His coming caused such religious impatience, what words must His presence have inspired! What transports of joy must it have enkindled in their souls! And what were all the holy men of the old law, compared to Mary? How can we liken their zeal and revelations to the charity and knowledge with which the Queen of Angels was filled! It is not only the desire and expectation which overwhelmed her with joy, it is the accomplishment of the promise; not the hope, but the possession. She is happy because she sees with her own eyes *Him whom many prophets and just men desired to see;* because she holds Him in her arms and presses Him to her heart, and recognizes in Him the glory, the salvation, and the redemption of Israel. By the light which He sheds around, she sees the night of falsehood and error dispelled, the

reign of sin ended, that of virtue and justice begun, and *God, remembering His mercy, accomplishing the promise made to Abraham and to his posterity.* What renders her joy greater, is the thought that she has hastened the happy moment of deliverance, by her fervor and humility; that the *Light of the World* has come forth from her womb; and finally, that, as Mother of the Incarnate Word, she has powerfully contributed to the glory of God and the salvation of men. At this thought, which the presence of the Divine Infant unceasingly revives, *Her soul doth magnify the Lord, and her spirit doth rejoice in God her Saviour.*

Accustom yourself, dear child, to contemplate the Blessed Virgin throughout all the mysteries of the Holy Infancy; and in gratitude for all the sacrifices which our deliverance and reconciliation with God have cost her, endeavor to cultivate a true and tender devotion to her, faithfully serve and invoke her, and, according to the spirit of the different solemnities instituted in her honor, make it your happiness to share in her joys and her sorrows.

Colloquy with the Blessed Virgin upon the joy which she felt at the birth of the Saviour.

THE CHILD.—Glorious Virgin Mary, what joy

for you to see those days of grace shine forth which were so earnestly longed for, and which the Patriarchs could only *behold from afar*, to contemplate *Him in whom all the tribes of the earth were to be blessed.* What consolation for your faith, what a source of pious joy for you!

THE BLESSED VIRGIN.—It is true that, penetrated with the glory of God and the love which is His due, my soul experienced great joy, from the truly worthy adorations and glory which the Divine child rendered to His Majesty. I united myself to the pure homage and burning desires of His heart, in order to obtain the renovation and sanctification of the hearts of men.

THE CHILD.—Although I seem cold and indifferent for the Divine honor, and the spiritual good of souls, yet it appears to me that my heart feels something of these holy affections. But how can I know, even in the most imperfect degree, any thing of those of which your motherly heart was the temple!

THE BLESSED VIRGIN.—Doubtlessly, no created being could ever have shared in the *fulness* of my joy, nor even conceived its extent, because my title of Mother of God is incommunicable. But it is just, my child, that it should be participated in by all Christians, especially upon the Anniversary

of the day upon which the Son of God came into the world to free them from everlasting death and to give them a title to the heavenly inheritance!

THE CHILD.—O Holy and glorious Mother of my Lord! *I will therefore rejoice in my Lord, and shout with joy before God my Saviour.* I will rejoice because He was born of you, and because His birth formed your happiness and that of all mankind. You are truly blessed, and your joy like your glory is a cause of gratitude to all hearts which love you.

PRACTICE.

Cultivate earnestly a true devotion to Mary.

PRAYER.

O holy and blessed Mother of God, permit me to share in your joy, since you are also my mother, and I am your child. Suffer me to adore your Divine Son with you, to offer Him my homage, and to give myself entirely to Him, in order to do in all things His holy will. Beg Him to be to me a Saviour, and to enable me to draw near to Him to partake of the blessings of his birth. Happy are you, O Blessed Virgin! since you bore in your chaste womb, the Lord and Creator of the world.

We have received Him through you, obtain for us by your assistance, to possess Him eternally. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

The Abbé Grou, in his "Interior of Jesus and Mary," tells us, that the first acts of our Blessed Lady on beholding her Divine Infant, were to adore Him profoundly as her God, to embrace Him tenderly as her Son, to envelop His delicate frame in swaddling clothes, to shelter Him as far as she could from the cold air, and to lay Him on a little straw in a crib. Her happiness was intense when she clasped Him in her arms; when she pressed Him to her heart; when she tenderly embraced Him and fed Him with her substance. Her felicity was profound when Jesus looked upon her in His love, and rewarded her with one of His heavenly smiles; when His little hands caressed her and His infant arms encircled her. The caresses of Jesus instilled ineffable sweetness in the heart of His Mother. But with perfect disengagement she received those mute expressions of His love, never appropriating, but referring them unreservedly to their author.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXVII. OF DECEMBER.

The Angels celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Possibly, dear child, you have never studied with attention, nor heard any lengthened instructions upon the Holy Angels, their existence, the honor which is due to them, their employments, their ministry, and their relations to men. Nevertheless, this Article of Faith is of great importance, since, being placed under their protection here below and confided to their care, we are one day to be admitted into their blessed society and to share in their glory. One of the most precious among the gifts of Divine Mercy is undoubtedly the Communion, or spiritual intercourse which He has established between the celestial inhabitants and man. Notwithstanding the excellence of their nature, they undertake to defend and protect us; they present our prayers and wants to God, preserve us from dangers, assist us in our combats with the enemy of our souls, upbraid us secretly for our infidelities, in a word, accomplish with all the zeal of boundless charity, *the order that they have received to keep us in all our ways.* For that

reason the angels caused the heavens to ring with the sound of their celestial harmony at the birth of the Saviour. The reparation of the outrage offered to the Divine Majesty by sin, and the reconciliation with human nature announced thereby filled them with rapture; and their joyous canticle was but the expression of their zeal for God's glory and their love for mankind.

Yes, dear child, the existence of angels is a dogma of Catholic Faith; it is attested by almost every page of the Sacred writings. To spare you quotations and researches; it is enough to recall to your minds the history of Hagar in the wilderness, of Tobias, and that of the three Children in the fiery furnace, but above all, that sentence of our Lord which should inspire all young hearts with such loving confidence: "*See that you despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you that their Angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.*" The angels are pure spirits, that is to say, they have not, like us, souls united to bodies; therefore their nature is superior to ours. They have further, the ascendency over us by their natural properties, and by all the advantages resulting therefrom, their subtlety, their quickness of perception, and the extent of their knowledge. God wished to

manifest the fulness of his power and the riches of His goodness in their creation. One of the Fathers calls them the first-born children of God, another, the living images and representatives of the Divinity. They are, in fact, like a mirror which reflects His adorable perfections. However, notwithstanding their high estate, they could merit or forfeit God's favor, and they were only to be confirmed in grace, and settled in eternal glory after having passed through trials prepared for them. Many of them, seduced by Lucifer, yielded to pride and revolted against God. Their punishment was swift and terrible; they were precipitated from high heaven into the depths of everlasting woe. Those are called *Evil Spirits* or *Devils.* From hatred toward God, and through envy of men who are destined to fill their vacant places in heaven, they cease not to lay snares for them and strive to render them their accomplices in crime, in order to make them their companions in eternal misery.

Those who remained faithful and persevered in righteousness were established forever in heaven and could never fall from grace. They are called *Good Angels* or, *good spirits.* These are they who come to our assistance and defend us against the assaults of the devil; they love us as their future fellow-

citizens and rejoice over our victories. The Fathers, relying upon the Sacred Writings, distinguish nine orders of blessed spirits, whose different names you will find in the Preface of the Mass. Their constant occupation in heaven is unceasingly to contemplate the Divine perfections, their happiness is unalterable; to praise, to adore, to love, and to possess the sovereign good will be their blessed employment throughout all eternity. They are charged with the execution of the designs of God's mercy on earth; He has made them our guardians and conductors; this is the foundation of the mutual joy and charity which will reign eternally between the angels and the elect, they were employed in the accomplisment of the principal mysteries of the Incarnation. You behold them this day descending from heaven to celebrate the birth of the Saviour. Unite yourself, dear child, to their pious canticles, render yourself worthy to hear them hereafter in holy Sion. In order to attain that end, endeavor, from this time forth, to imitate the innocence, piety, and gentleness of the angels. As smoke puts bees to flight, and bad smells drive away doves, so, says an ancient writer, does the infection of sin cause our Guardian Angel to depart from us.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the Angelic Hymn.

THE CHILD.—O my Saviour! I envy the happiness of the shepherds who were permitted to listen to the songs of the angels, celebrating Your birth! What consoling news! How that celestial harmony must have gladdened their hearts.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Never can the sweetest and most melodious sounds give persons a just idea of the ravishing songs of Heaven. But, dear child, your envy should be less excited by the charm of those angelic voices, than at the approach and sight of the Incarnate Mercy which they announced.

THE CHILD.—Divine Jesus, those sacred melodies seem sweet to me only because they called the shepherds to Your manger, and celebrated the most wonderful gift the Celestial Father could bestow upon man. It is Your birth which is the subject of my joy: You, You alone, adorable Infant! are the object of my wishes and my love.

THE INFANT JESUS.—I am the Creator both of angels and of men; however, I raised man after *his* fall, but *not* the angels who sinned. I did not take upon myself the angelical, but human nature. If, then, the angelic choirs celebrated my birth with such lively demonstrations of joy, what sentiments

of gratitude and love should animate the souls of those to whom it was to restore salvation, life, and happiness.

THE CHILD.—O King of Glory! it is not only Your angels who are called upon to celebrate Your wonders: *Bless the Lord, therefore, all ye His angels, glorify Him, all ye ministers of His who do His pleasure.* And in order that our voices may mingle in their songs of praise, purify them, O Divine Infant! and with our minds and hearts we will glorify You with them, and bless You forever, world without end.

PRACTICE.

Reanimate your devotion toward the Holy Angels.

PRAYER.

O pure and heavenly Spirits, who formed the court of the King of Kings, and faithfully accomplished His adorable will, obtain for us to imitate your promptness of obedience. Blessed Spirits who, beholding heretofore the Divine Majesty unveiled, contemplate it this day with pious astonishment, covered with a veil of flesh, and reduced to the state of Infancy, obtain for us some share in your affections and intelligence, in order that, penetrated with joy at the sight of the immense love

of the Incarnate Word, we may glorify Him by our works, and be made worthy to sing His praises eternally in Heaven. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

The very night of the Redeemer's Birth, the Angel of God announced the great event to some shepherds in the vicinity, who kept watch over their flocks, telling them that a Saviour was born to them, whom they should recognize by the swaddling clothes in which he was enveloped, and the manger on which he reposed. At the same moment they heard the melody of a multitude of the heavenly host, who sang, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good-will." (Luke ii., 14.)

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXVIII. OF DECEMBER.

The Infant Jesus renders glory to God.

You had good reason, dear child, for the envy which you felt yesterday toward those happy shepherds, who were directed by the songs of angels

to the Manger of Bethlehem, and who, docile to the interior voice which called them still more secretly, had the happiness to be the first to adore the Incarnate God. Earth had never heard similar sounds. Angels had frequently visited it, but had never before sung aloud the Divine praises. But remember, you are destined to hear the same sweet songs with which the air then resounded, and, what is still more consoling, you will one day join in them among the blessed company of the elect in Heaven. Thus, you have now no cause to envy either the shepherd adorers, or those happy spirits whose glorious transports you will share in hereafter. But, dear child, we are now called upon to endeavor fully to comprehend the sense of that heavenly hymn; and since God has permitted it to reach us, it is our pious and consolatory duty to meditate upon, and search into its meaning.

This glorious canticle, which is sung at the beginning of Mass, and is styled in prayer books the Angelical Hymn, is not exclusively composed of the words uttered by those blessed spirits. The Church, in order to explain them, and better adapt them to the understanding of her children, has added to them expressions setting forth her gratitude, happiness, and love. It is truly her canticle of adoration, her hymn of joy. For that reason

she forbids its use during her times of mourning and penance. But, sublime as are the invocations and praises she has added to it, they serve but as the development of those words, *Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good-will.* When, therefore, dear child, you hear them sung, or, when you utter them in private, beg the Infant Jesus to grant you the fervor of the angels. And in order to penetrate its meaning this day, implore the angels to obtain light and grace for you.

To understand clearly how the Saviour's birth restored to God that glory of which sin had deprived Him, it is necessary, dear child, grave as the explanation may seem to you, to try to form a just idea of what is meant by the glory of God. To speak correctly, not only does all glory belong to God alone, since to Him alone appertains goodness, wisdom, and power; but He only can worthily glorify Himself, since He alone can fully understand Himself. His essential glory results from the greatness, the sovereign independence, in a word, from the perfection of His being. It can, not only, never be taken from Him, but also never suffer the slightest alteration. He is; therein lies His glory: He knows Himself; that is His glory: He loves Himself; that constitutes at once His happiness and glory. He could create millions of

worlds, and His glory would not be increased. Men and demons may league themselves together to outrage Him; His essential glory will not be diminished. God abides in inaccessible light, says St. Paul; but He has created beings around Him destined to manifest and glorify His perfections. That manifestation and the praises resulting from it, are what theologians call the accidental glory of God, since it is not the necessary result of His nature or Divine perfections, but of His exterior works. This glory is ever rendered to Him by all irrational beings, because they always represent or show forth some one of His perfections, and thus accomplish the end of their creation. This is exemplified in the magnificent words of the Psalmist: *The Heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night to night sheweth knowledge.*

The insect hidden in the grass adores Him as perfectly in his simple way as does the lion who shakes the desert by his roarings; and the humble plant which lives but a day; as well as the cedar of Libanus. However, in the midst of this harmony of the universe, God, it appears, could not receive that praise which was His due, until He created a being capable of knowing and loving

Him. He therefore formed man to His image and likeness, and established him as the interpreter, as the priest of nature, near his Almighty Father. All created things, says St. Austin, call upon man to honor God in their behalf. You know, dear child, that sin had overthrown man's glorious occupation. By the mere fact of his disobedience, he had not only violated God's glory, but he became incapable of ever repairing his fault. Thus, he, who had been created to know Him, in punishment of his pride, was plunged in the darkness of ignorance, and lost all knowledge of his God; created to adore Him, he was drawn into idolatry through the slavery of his passions; created to love Him alone, he was detached from Him, and turned by his depravity of heart toward the love of earthly things.

The birth of the Saviour put an end to this misery and sorrow. It restored to God that glory of which disobedience and sin had robbed Him, and that in a superabundant manner, since the Word, by uniting Himself to our miserable nature, offered the humiliation and sufferings of a God in expiation of the pride and sin of mankind, and by raising it from its fall, re-established it in the knowledge, service, and love of its Creator.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the Glory which He rendered to God.

THE CHILD.—O my Lord! from Your first entrance into the world, You glorified Your Divine Father by Your adorations, Your humiliations, and by that excessive obedience which I am so little disposed to imitate.

THE INFANT JESUS.—It was in order to glorify God that I took upon myself flesh, and became subject unto death; it was to make amends for your pride that I descended to the lowest degree of humility; was born of an earthly mother; wept in a manger; was wrapped in swaddling clothes; and even took the form of a slave.

THE CHILD.—Is it then true, Divine Jesus! that You underwent all these humiliations in order to expiate the crime of fallen man? I, too, have part in that crime; vanity, self-esteem, desire of earthly love, were the earliest inclinations of my heart. You seem to seek for the lowest depths of humility, to hide Your greatness; and I, who am but dust and ashes, strive to number myself among the great ones of the earth.

THE INFANT JESUS.—If the lowliness of my birth has commenced to enlighten your eyes, and

touch your heart; if you understand the sacrifices which it imposes upon you, give glory to God.

THE CHILD.—God of goodness and virtue! how can I, young as I am, weak and powerless for good, scarcely capable of one pure desire—how can I, I ask, render glory to God?

THE INFANT JESUS.—Courage, dear child; He only asks for praise suited to your capacity. Consecrate to Him the first years of your heart, which was created for God alone, and which He only can render happy. Thus you can glorify Him by the innocence of your life, by your mildness, piety and charity, and by retracing in your conduct all those virtues of which My life offers you so touching a model.

PRACTICE.

Ask zeal for the glory of God.

PRAYER.

Divine Infant, through whom the faithful glorify Your Father, although You observe such profound silence, I unite myself to all the adorations and praises which Your soul unceasingly renders to God, from Your first entrance into the world. In spite of my misery, weakness and poverty, I bless and glorify Him in, and with You. I dare to ask,

and I hope to obtain all. He has overwhelmed us, through You, with all spiritual blessings. He ceases not to bless us in and by You, in order that we may glorify Him on earth and possess Him eternally in Heaven. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

It is mentioned in the life of Brother Benedict Lopez, that while he remained in the army, he led a life stained with sins. One day he entered a church in Travancor, and saw an image of Mary with the Infant Jesus. Our Lord placed before his eyes his abandoned life. At the sight of his sins he almost despaired of pardon; but turning to Mary, with tears in his eyes he commended himself to her, and he then perceived that the Holy Infant also was weeping, and that His tears were falling on the altar; so much so, that it was observed by others, who hastened to collect them in a cloth. Soon after this, Benedict, full of contrition, forsook the world, and became a brother-coadjutor of the Company of Jesus, where he lived and died with the greatest devotion to the Sacred Infancy of Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXIX. OF DECEMBER.

The Infant Jesus brings Peace to Men.

All the oracles which had announced the coming of the Messiah, had represented it as the signal and era of universal peace and concord. "In those days," says Isaias, "the people shall turn their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into sickles. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion and the sheep shall abide together, and a little child shall lead them." Under these agreeable similitudes, dear child, the prophets delighted to depict the union of all people of the earth, and the gathering of all hearts under the law of love. That prophecy has had its literal accomplishment. At the time of our Lord's birth, all the world was at peace; and that general peace which Divine Providence had arranged in order to prepare the way for Christianity, and to facilitate the preaching of the Gospel, was but the image and emblem of that interior peace which sin had destroyed, and which the Prince of Peace, as the Prophet Isaias calls Him, could alone re-establish.

Doubtless, dear child, you have frequently visited in families where the fear of God reigns supreme, and where consequently paternal authority is reverently obeyed. There order, peace and union of hearts have their abode. The parents are good and condescending; the children submissive and affectionate, anticipating all the wishes of their elders, and making the accomplishment of duty their happiness. But perhaps, also, you have met with some children who, shutting their hearts against the influence of religion, no longer look upon the authors of their being as the representatives of the Divinity in their regard. Consequently, they continually insult their parents by their unfeeling conduct. On one side you will hear threats, reproaches, and sometimes curses; on the other, tears, murmuring, revolt, and too often, criminal outrages; and thus they keep up a constant state of warfare. Such, my child, is a true picture of the deplorable state into which sin had plunged us. Man was at war against God, whose power and goodness he had outraged, and in whom he saw only an irritated Master and an implacable Judge; he was at war with his fellow-man, whom he found blinded by passions and disorderly inclinations; but, above all, he was at war with himself, in the most cruel manner.

Drawn toward truth, he was the sport of delusions; charmed by the sweet aspect of virtue, he was led astray by the most shameful vices, seeking for happiness, and never finding it, tormented by the thought of his immortality, and seeing nothing beyond the grave; finding nothing but enigmas and contradictions, without as well as within. Such, dear child, was the condition of the human race; to such a state had sin reduced it. Such was the triple war which He, who is styled by one of the prophets, *The Peace*, came to put an end to. He reconciled us with God by the remission of our sins; with man, through the law of love which He spread abroad into our hearts; and with ourselves, by His grace which He communicated to us, and which He unceasingly renews and keeps alive in our souls, by means of prayer and the Sacraments.

Endeavor, dear child, to keep carefully this Divine peace, this calm of a pure and innocent heart, which makes amends for all else, and whose loss could not be recompensed by all this world's goods. Remark, well, that *this peace of Jesus Christ*, as St. Paul calls it, is only promised to *men of good-will;* that is to say, to souls docile to the law of God, and to the inspirations of His holy spirit. What a misfortune to have a bad will, an evil con-

science, a mind closed against Faith, and a heart revolted against God and His holy law! What unhappiness never to dare to raise our eyes to heaven, nor to look into our own heart, no longer to love God, nor to pray to Him, nor to call Him our Father, and to find our accusers in the image of Mary, the sight of the Cross, the remembrance of the crib of our Saviour themselves! Dearest child, earnestly pray for, and keep at all hazard, that peace promised to men of good-will.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the peace announced by the Angels.

The Child.—O my Saviour! I had never yet understood the sense of the consoling words by which Your holy angels announced man's reconciliation with God, and I did not comprehend why they were a subject of such great joy to earth.

The Infant Jesus.—But, my child, it is, however, easy to understand that peace is the best gift to earth, the fruit of my Incarnation and death; for that reason at my resurrection, as at my birth, I wished solemnly to proclaim that peace, which could only be obtained by my sacrifice; but in giving it to my disciples, I did not give it as the world gave it.

THE CHILD.—Divine Jesus! deign to explain Your words to me.

THE INFANT JESUS.—The peace which the world promises is not a true peace; it does not reach the heart, and cannot defend it against the evils of life, nor from the fear of death. The gratification of the passions, and the enjoyments of the world may lull and intoxicate the soul, but they can never bestow upon it that calm and perfect repose which she finds only in God.

THE CHILD.—Ah, my Divine Master, notwithstanding my inconstancy and inexperience, I have already more than once noticed that the gratification of a desire does not prevent its reappearance. Often after having obtained what I ardently longed for, my heart was only more unhappy and disturbed. What then must I do to attain true peace?

THE INFANT JESUS.—If you sincerely wish to obtain and preserve peace of mind, my dear child, you must resist your passions, strive against your own weakness, seek for grace, and count firmly upon its assistance: and never act against your conscience. No, for my prophet tells you: *He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep, and abundance of peace to him who keepeth the law.*

PRACTICE.

Watch over your heart to keep it ever in peace.

PRAYER.

Divine Jesus, who brought peace into the world by our reconciliation with your Father, and who causes it to reign in the hearts of Your faithful people, I beseech You, by Your adorable Infancy, never permit me to have the misfortune to lose it by sin. Therefore, O my Saviour, grant me the graces of prayer and vigilance, in order that, protected by Your mercy and continually on the watch against temptation, I may never allow myself to be surprised by the enemy of salvation, but, remaining ever attached to Your law, I may walk with confidence in the ways of Peace. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

Father Patrignani relates, that there was in Messina, a child of noble birth called Domenic Ansalone, who was in the habit of going often to a certain church to visit an image of Mary, who held in her arms the Infant Jesus, of which he became quite enamored. When Domenic lay at the point of death, he implored his parents with great earnestness to bring the image of the beloved child into his room. His wishes were satisfied; full of

delight, he placed it on his bed, and looking at it in the most loving manner, and now and then turning to the Infant, he said, "My Jesus, have pity on me!" then turning to the bystanders, "Behold," he said, "behold how beautiful is my little Saviour!" On the last night of his life, he called his parents, and in their presence he first said to the Holy Infant, "My Jesus, I leave Thee my heir." And then he begged his father and mother to employ a certain small sum of money which he had, in having nine Masses celebrated after his death, and with the rest to make a handsome robe for his Infant heir. Before he died, he raised his eyes to heaven with a look of joy, and said, "Oh, how beautiful! how beautiful is my Lord!" and saying this, he expired.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXX. OF DECEMBER.

The Infant Jesus draws the Shepherds to His Manger.

I WILL suppose you, dear child, completely unacquainted with Gospel History, and some one asking you this question: "When God deigned to be born into the world, what men, think you, did He choose for the first witnesses of His coming and the first adorers of His sacred person? Your thoughts would certainly turn toward those personages who, by their profession, knowledge, and constant study, would naturally be prepared for that great event, and capable of supporting the news of its occurrence by the authority of their names and learning, and you would answer: "The Doctors of the Law, and the Chief Priests who held in their hands the Prophetical writings which announce its approach." This would seem true, wise, and sound reasoning if there was a question of a purely human event. But since it refers to the work of God, to the prodigy of His love and mercy, we cannot answer it by the rules

of human prudence. You speak as a man, dear child, and God acts as God.

Remark that the principal end of the Incarnation, and consequently of the birth of the Redeemer, was to expiate and atone for the sin of pride, and to smooth the road of humility for man by His example. Therefore, from His entrance into the world, all in and about him should breathe of humility, His parents, His favorites, and His heralds. Knowledge puffeth up the heart, says the Apostle, and all those masters in Israel so proud of their learning, who, notwithstanding the splendor of His works, and Divine teachings, repulsed a Messiah who did not fulfil their carnal desires and earthly hopes, would they, think you, have recognized him in a poor infant surrounded by all the evidences of poverty? Undoubtedly not! it could only be done at first by poor, simple, and unpretentious men. Besides, men of rank and learning undertaking to proclaim the marvels attending His birth would have created distrust, and seemed only to be seeking to bring themselves into notice; but who would think of contradicting the simple and natural story of the shepherds? The fulness of their joy shone forth clearly, their words were guileless, and their testimony found its strength in their innocent simplicity. It was

not the first time Angels had conversed with men; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been favored with the visits of celestial spirits, and their descendants should certainly be disposed to believe the imitators of their manner of life when they announced that the earth was again to behold a Shepherd King who was the Son of David.

But listen attentively, dear child, to the account given by the Sacred Historian; there is no word in the Gospel which is not deeply instructive. It was in the designs of Divine Mercy and Wisdom that the shepherds were first told of the good news of the Advent of the Messiah. Suddenly, in the middle of the night, as they were watching their flocks, an Angel of the Lord appeared unto them, and the brightness of Divine light shone round about them, and they were sore afraid; from whence came their fear? Should not the sight of the angel who was charged with announcing such consoling news to them have caused joy rather than alarm? Oh, dear child, man, since his fall into sin, beheld only with fear that Supreme Majesty whom he had offended; any manifestation of His Divinity filled him at first with dread, but the angel reassured them. *Fear not*, said he, *for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people. For this*

day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord, in the city of David. Mark well, in that place so long indicated by the Prophets. *And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger.* Can it be possible, dear child, that such are the marks by which Christ, the Lord, is to be recognized? The Word; the joy of all the heavenly hosts to be found in the person of an Infant who speaks only by his tears; the Uncreated Light hidden under swaddling-clothes! Yes, there they will recognize Him. The Infant God who has called them will give them light to understand the mystery, and will reveal to them by these singular signs which have been indicated to them, what He is by nature and what He has made Himself through grace. God and man, the little Infant of a day, and yet the Father of Eternity. Beg from the Infant Jesus, dear child, the innocence, simplicity, and humble docility of the shepherds: and if you seek Him like them, you will find Him as they did, and He will reveal Himself to your heart.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the Visit af the Angel to the Shepherds.

THE CHILD.—How rejoiced I am, dear Master, to find You, upon Your first entrance into the world, calling around You the weak, the poor, and the ignorant ones of the earth! Such admirable condescension leads me to hope that You will not despise my homage. But, even while adoring, I cannot quite understand that choice, apparently so opposed to the execution of Your designs.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Oh child of Adam! my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways. Do not lose sight of the fact that I came into the world to cure that great wound of the human heart, namely, pride; to that vice I opposed the humility and poverty of my crib, and I chose my first worshippers and my first preachers as, later, I chose my disciples and apostles, from among the poor and ignorant.

THE CHILD.—O Lord, I know that all instruments are equal in Your hands, and that by a ray of Divine light You could enlighten the minds of the shepherds and make eloquent the tongues of children when it pleases You. But why were they so fearful at the sight of the heavenly messenger? It appears to me that I should be de-

lighted to see one of Your angels shining with light.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Ah, my child! the happiness of hearing the voices of my angels and obeying their inspirations is preferable to that of beholding them. So long as innocence reigns in your soul, they will not fail to visit it; and the holy joy which you feel in the practice of goodness will be the effect of their presence. But if you become unfaithful—

THE CHILD.—O God, the everlasting joy of the just, do not permit me ever to force my guardian angel to depart from me, nor ever to have the misfortune to displease him. I will faithfully follow the road he will mark out for me, and study attentively the signs he will give me by which to find and recognize you.

THE INFANT JESUS.—The way is already marked out; but few walk therein! innumerable multitudes abandon it! Never forsake it, dear child, come into the Church, the true Bethlehem, there you will find your God, who is continually born anew for you on the altar of His sacrifice. He reposes night and day in His tabernacle, as He rested in His manger, hidden under the veils of the Sacrament, as He was at His birth under swaddling clothes. But His humiliations will only

render Him dearer to you! Hidden, annihilated as He is, He is the Christ, the Almighty God, the Judge of the living and the dead.

PRACTICE.

Follow with docility all the inspirations of grace.

PRAYER.

Divine Jesus, who through truly marvellous goodness, called the poor shepherds to Your manger, and by choosing the poor simple and ignorant of the earth for Your first heralds, gave such great encouragement to the weak, grant me that rectitude and simplicity which wins Your favor, in order that, following with docility the light of grace, I may one day arrive at that eternal city of which You are the Light and splendor. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

It is related in the *Dominican Diary* for the 7th of October, that when St. Dominic was preaching at Rome, there was there a sinner called the beautiful Catherine. She received a rosary from the hands of the Saint, and began to recite it; but she did not leave off her wicked course of life. One day Jesus appeared to her; first in the shape

of a young man, and afterward the figure changed itself into that of a beautiful infant, but with a crown of thorns upon His head and a cross upon His shoulders, shedding tears from His eyes and blood from his body. He then said to her: "It is enough; no more, Catherine; it is enough, do not offend Me any more; see how much thou has cost Me since I began as an infant to suffer for thee, and never left off suffering till My death. Catherine thereupon went immediately in search of St. Dominic, confessed to him, and, instructed by him, after having given all she had to the poor, and having shut herself up in a narrow cell, led a life of such fervor, and received such graces from the Lord, that the Saint was struck with admiration; and at last, having been visited by our Blessed Lady, she died a most happy death.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXXI. OF DECEMBER.

The Infant Jesus adored by the Shepherds.

HAVE you not been greatly touched, dear child, at the sight of God's mercy and goodness toward the shepherds? Through what partiality did he

deign to choose them to be the first witnesses of His birth and other mysteries? Their innocence and simplicity, even though it found favor in His eyes, could not have merited such a grace for them. But could I not ask with equal justice, Why has God called you into His marvellous light? What title had you to His preference? Is it not into the midst of the night of infancy, into the thick darkness of sin that He has sent His Angel to you, and caused His Divine light to shine upon your soul? Alas! perhaps more than once, when He has drawn near to communicate His grace to you, you were found wanting in vigilance and fidelity. Whatever reply your heart may make to these questions, dear child, continue to study the Gospel recital, and find in the alacrity and docility of the shepherds, the model of your correspondence with the inspirations and secret warnings of the Holy Spirit of God.

The sweet voice of the heavenly messenger restored their confidence and the harmony of the angelic choirs caused them unbounded joy. The songs had ceased, yet they seemed still to hear them. But God does not bestow His gifts upon man merely to astonish him or to produce simply some passing emotion in his soul, but in order to raise his thoughts above and draw him to Himself,

and fervor and activity are the first evidences of grace well received. Thus the shepherds said one to another: *Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath shewed to us.* O how precious, dear child, what an inestimable advantage is the habit of associating with virtuous people, how profitable are those friendships which are cemented by religion! Such friends mutually encourage one another in the practice of good works, and, sustained by each other's example, walk rapidly onward in the paths of perfection. Our shepherds hasten their departure; they arrive and find *Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in the manger.* Can you not see them, dear child, as they press round Him with a holy eagerness to contemplate His beauty, their gestures, looks, and tears of emotion mutually expressing the impressions they receive. Respect seals their mouths, but involuntary cries break from them. They look at Him, they bless and adore Him, and when their piety is thoroughly satiated with the ravishing spectacle, they leave the holy place blessing and praising God. Here lies, they say, "that Saviour so long promised to us. Alas! by what signs has He manifested Himself to our eyes? By the most abject poverty. Certainly we will never more

complain of our own misery. We will prefer our cabins to the king's palaces. We will live contentedly under our thatched roofs; too happy in having that resemblance to the King of Kings. Come, let us spread abroad the welcome news; let us console the poor ones of the earth by the recital of the wonders we have seen."

What lessons for you, dear child, in the conduct of the shepherds. What admirable models of docility, faith, and humility! Do you not recognize the operation of Divine Grace in their pure and simple souls? But where shall we find words to express the heroic simplicity of the Queen of Angels, who in profound silence listened to those poor shepherds, and kept all their words, pondering them in her heart. Yet, what had she to learn? What could she not have told them respecting her Divine Son? Beg her to obtain for you the grace of loving to hear God spoken of, and above all, seek, in attention to the instructions of the priests of the Church, the good of your soul, and your advancement in virtue.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the conduct of the Shepherds.

THE CHILD.—Divine Jesus! what lights and what pure affections You communicate to simple souls

and upright hearts! And then with what generous ardor they seek after and attach themselves to You.

THE INFANT JESUS.—It is true, that I sent one of my angels to announce my birth to the shepherds, and that a bright light guided their steps; but have I done less for you, dear child? If dissipation and frivolity did not too often prevent you from hearing the voice of your angel guardian, what rapid advances you would make in virtue and wisdom, and how light you would deem all sacrifice made for my love.

THE CHILD.—O my adorable Redeemer! can I hesitate at any sacrifice when I contemplate You in the state of weakness, privation and sorrow, to which Your love for me has reduced You?

THE INFANT JESUS.—You think so now, my child, but soon the world will call upon you to participate in its pleasures and delights, and your heart, already often agitated by vain desires, will find the innocent pomp of my solemnities very melancholy. Your angel will say to you,—Let us go up to Bethlehem. But a more seductive voice will endeavor to draw you away into the broad road of sin.

THE CHILD.—O my Saviour! be my strength: do not suffer me to become unfaithful to You. Fill

my heart with that sweet and powerful attraction with which Your adorable presence filled those of the shepherds; that like them I may ever bring back from my visit to Your holy churches, zeal for Your glory, and fidelity to Your service.

PRACTICE.

Seek the society of pious and virtuous people.

PRAYER.

Divine Jesus, who inspired the shepherds with holy zeal and emulation, implant in my heart a true and sincere affection for pure souls, and preserve me for contact with corrupt hearts, lest they pervert my faith and innocence. Give me friends after your own heart, in order that, in company with them, and encouraged by their examples, I may learn to seek and serve you upon earth, and may have the happiness of blessing and adoring you with them eternally in heaven. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

It is related in the Life of Father Zucchi, of the Society of Jesus, who was most devout to the Infant Jesus, and whose image he made use of to gain many souls to God, that one day he gave one of these little images to a lady, who, though perfectly in-

nocent and good in her habits, was very far from having the idea of becoming a nun. The young lady accepted the gift; but said to him, with a smile, "What have I to do with this infant?" "Nothing," answered he, "but to put it on the spinette, on which you so often play." She did so; and, having constantly this image before her eyes, she could not avoid looking at it, and from looking at it, she began to feel some small touch of devotion. Then she was inflamed with a desire to become better; so that the spinette was rather an occasion to her of prayer than amusement. At last she resolved to leave the world and become a religious. Then, full of joy, she went and related to Father Zucchi that the Infant had drawn her to His love; and, disengaging her affections from earthly things, had taken entire possession of them Himself. She became a religious, and gave herself up to a life of perfection.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE FIRST OF JANUARY.

Mystery of the Circumcision.

WITHOUT doubt, dear child, all the circumstances connected with the Saviour's birth, have

already taught you clearly this fundamental truth of Christianity, namely, that the end proposed in the Incarnation of the Word, was satisfaction for sin and man's reformation. But why was this obscurity, this poverty, and this unexampled abjection necessary? Was it not enough that the Son of Man deigned to take human flesh upon Himself? Must He descend still lower and embrace, through a spirit of humiliation, the state of the poorest child of Adam's race? Look among the poor: can you find one even, who was born in a stable; one who was forced to give his child a manger for its cradle? No, Jesus alone is reduced to that extremity; that is the price at which He is to expiate our pride; it is by such lessons that He is to teach us self-denial and renouncement of the false goods of this world. By submitting to-day to the painful and humiliating law of circumcision, He makes amends for the crime of sensuality, and teaches His followers mortification of the heart and senses. What useful counsels, what important lessons, you may draw from the consideration of a mystery, so well calculated to confound those effeminate ideas so generally spread abroad, that studied refinement of care and tenderness, of which health is the pretext; and whose inevitable effect is, to enervate

the soul still more than the body, and to prepare for it, at so early an age, terrible dangers and conflicts for the rest of its life! But, since the first day of the New Year may turn your thoughts from so important a consideration, it is perhaps more advantageous for you to choose one nearer to the ideas to which the day naturally gives rise.

However young you may be, dear child, you cannot fail to discover that the number of years of which life is composed, is very limited, and yet the place which they occupy therein is very large. What are twenty or thirty years? Judge of them by the rapidity with which you have passed over the interval which separates you from your infancy. Does it not seem that you are still near its limits? Well, then, the same swift flight with which your first ten or twelve years have passed will sweep away those which are to follow them. You have frequently crossed a lake or a river in a boat; when you looked forward you seemed to make no progress: when you turned your head backward, you saw the shore receding from your sight, and the port whence you started already far from you. At your age, forty or fifty years seem an endless time; and when one speaks to you of an old man of sixty or seventy years of age, you can scarcely conceive so long a term of years;

and yet it is true, that were your life to comprise one hundred years, you will have reached its end but too quickly. If I insist upon these reflections, dear child, it is because the most dangerous and greatest of all the illusions, by which childhood and youth are deluded, are those of the continuance of time and the length of life.

The best means to dissipate them is to meditate upon, and form a just idea of them. Once convinced of the shortness of time, we learn to employ it in a better manner; the pains and pleasures of life wear a different aspect: the former lose their sting, and the latter their charm. We are less wearied with the short trials to which virtue is subjected, when we compare them with the recompense promised to her fidelity. Finally, we comprehend that God, being the God of all time, it is outraging His goodness, and injuring his greatness, to rob him of our earliest affections, and reserve for Him only the tardy homage of an existence upon whose length no man living can calculate. He asks for our first thoughts, dear child, it is the morning sacrifice in which he delights; and it was, without doubt, because they offered it to Him with pure hearts, that Abel, Joseph, Samuel, Tobias and Daniel were overwhelmed with His choicest blessings. He, of whom they were but

the precursors and figures, must necessarily have surpassed them in every thing. Jesus, at the first moment of His Incarnation, offered Himself to His Divine Father, and thus commenced with His life that sacrifice which was to terminate it. Cannot you find some slight one to offer to Him to-day, dear child? Among the little gifts which you receive from your parents will not piety and charity find their share? Does a Christian child owe nothing to the child Jesus?

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the obligation to do penance incumbent upon all ages.

The Child.—Oh, my Saviour, You began early to tread the road of sacrifice and penance! Scarcely born, You condemned your innocent flesh to all its rigorous requirements, and yet it owed nothing to Divine Justice, and could fear nothing from the attraction of sin, since it was formed of holiness, and You were sinless.

The Infant Jesus.—That is true, my child, but I wished to offer a superabundant satisfaction to my Father, and an example and lesson to all ages. When I embraced the law of mortification in its full extent, from the first hour of my life, what age and what condition of life could hold itself exempt, or complain of its severity?

THE CHILD.—O Adorable Victim of my salvation! Lamb, who bearest the sins of the whole world, I must confess, to my own confusion, that, hitherto, I have believed that mortification could not fall to the share of childhood, and that it was only required of great sinners, or of those who were old and confirmed in virtue and holiness.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Thus do the errors and prejudices of the world reach even to those hearts who know not its dangers, and turn them from my service before they can experience its sweetness. Alas! no one is innocent, not even the infant, whose life is of only one day's duration; no one, consequently, is dispensed from doing penance.

THE CHILD.—Ah, my Saviour! what must I do? I will count no sacrifice too great, in order to testify my love and desire to imitate You; direct me, my heart is ready.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Such are the dispositions I require, dear child, nourish them carefully; combat your evil inclinations, resist all longings of pride and sensuality, and never refuse any sacrifice which my Holy Spirit requires of you.

PRACTICE.

Give an alms in honor of the Infant Jesus.

PRAYER.

Divine Jesus, who consecrated the first moments of Your life by the practice of penance; and who, being the Holy of Holies, wished to have the seal of sin impressed upon Your innocent flesh, plant firmly in my heart a horror of evil. Weaken in my soul all the allurements of sensuality, and all dangerous pleasures, in order that, removing far from me all that You condemned by Your sufferings, and drawing near to You by holy desires, I may be inseparably united to You throughout eternity. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

We read in the life of St. John, Patriarch of Alexandria, who from his profuse alms-deeds, was surnamed the Almoner, that when the Persians laid waste Syria, vast multitudes of every condition and sex fled to Alexandria, where the Holy Patriarch received them with wonderful charity, and when some of his clergy asked him what they were to do when men dressed in splendid habits asked alms of them, he replied that he was the dispenser of Christ, from whom he had received these orders, "Give to him that asketh of thee." On one occasion seeing a poor person appear ashamed to receive so large an alms, he encouraged him, saying, "Brother, I have not yet spilt

my blood for you, as Jesus Christ, my Master and my God, commands me."

MEDITATION.

FOR THE II. OF JANUARY.

The name of Jesus.

When the prophets successively announced the advent of the Messiah promised to the earth, they designated Him under different names. They are mostly collected in the prayer which you daily recite, dear child, in the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus; many of them are also contained in the invocations which, under the title of the O' of Advent, the Church sings with such pomp during the week immediately preceding Christmas Day: however, it has been impossible to comprise them all in these prayers: their number and diversity forbid it. There are many with which you frequently meet in books of devotion, and it will be useful for you to learn their signification; the most remarkable are those which designate Him either as the Desired of all nations, the Desire of the Eternal Hills, to teach us that the heavens and the earth, angels as well as men, sighed ardently after the great event of the Redemption; or as

Emanuel, that is to say, God with us. Could the sacred Oracles reveal the mystery of the Incarnation in a more clear and precise manner? How would God be with men? How could *He be seen upon earth and hold intercourse with them* if He had not made Himself man like unto them? The greater part of the other names are easy to understand, however little they are studied, but Isaias has accumulated all the most magnificent designations, and those names, which could not be applied to any other than the person of the Messiah, establish so clear a proof of His divinity, that you should, dear child, learn by heart the following beautiful passage: "For a CHILD IS BORN to us," he cries, speaking of the distant future as of a time already passed, because he had seen, in spirit, the event accomplished. "A Son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace." Reflect upon those incommunicable names, and you will admit that He has a just right to them all.

Of all the names which recall His attributes as the only begotten Son of God, and the Son of man by his temporal birth, the only ones by which He wished constantly to be known, were those of

Jesus and of Christ; by that of Jesus, since it expressed His sublime design in descending from heaven, and the mission of mercy He had received from His Father, since Jesus, in the original meaning of the word, signifies Saviour, Lord; by that of Christ, because the union of the Divinity with human nature in His person, having been as it were the anointing, it expressed at once His Royalty and His Priesthood. It is true that that mysterious name at which, throughout eternity every knee should bow, whether in heaven, upon earth, or in hell, had been previously borne by two men distinguished in the annals of sacred history, Joshua, the successor of Moses and the inheritor, of his power, and Jesus, son of Josedech, of the tribe of Levi. Remark, my dear child, that the mission of those two personages was to announce and to prefigure that of the Incarnate Word; the first by introducing the people of God into the promised land; and the second, by re-establishing among them, after their return from captivity, the authority of the holy Law and the majesty of Divine worship. But what a long interval between these figurative Saviours and Him whom they represented; as the promised land, into which Joshua led the children of Israel, was but an imperfect image of heaven, and the re-establishment of the legal observances

by the son of Josedech, a shadow of evangelical perfection, and adoration in spirit and in truth; thus the name of Jesus given to those two great men, was only a figure of that all powerful one by which we were to be reconciled with God and re-established in our heavenly inheritance; what sentiments of respect, confidence and love, should these considerations give rise to in your soul! It is the name of your Creator, of your Saviour, of the Victim of your sins. If it forms the joy of Angels, if the elect in heaven are to wear it written on their forehead, as a mark of their fidelity, and to utter it during all eternity as the expression of their happiness, should you not prepare whilst here below, to join hereafter, in those magnificent canticles of praise, by repeating it with holy gladness, and engrave it on your heart as the seal of your fidelity and gratitude?

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon His adorable Name.

The Child.—Lord Jesus! Your name is worthy to be admired throughout the whole earth! By what mercy do you permit the tongue of a feeble child to celebrate its praises?

The Infant Jesus.—When I appeared to Moses in the midst of the burning bush, I did not reveal

to him my incommunicable name; but I ordered him to answer those who should ask him by whom he was sent: *He Who Is* has sent me unto you; but when I myself was sent by my Father, I wished my *Name* alone to manifest my mission, and that whilst waiting for it, all hearts should be filled with hope in its efficacy.

THE CHILD.—How great is Your goodness, oh, my Saviour! and yet fear sometimes reigns so strongly in my soul, that my confidence in it cannot be restored. In order to pronounce Your sacred name, my mouth should never have been defiled by falsehood, nor by words contrary to charity.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Oh! my name will purify it, and seal it against all that it disapproves of. It possesses the virtue of curing the wounds of the soul, and preserving it from the contagion of sin. Cast far from you, then, my child, both fear and mistrust, they are insulting to my love.

THE CHILD.—Dearest Jesus! Loving Saviour! purify my heart and my lips, that I may never dishonor that blessed name which You so mercifully encourage me to invoke. Grant me this grace, that it may be the first word I pronounce upon awakening, and may I fall asleep whilst repeating it.

PRACTICE.

Always pronounce respectfully the Holy Name of Jesus.

PRAYER.

Dearest Lord, I beseech You to engrave Your adorable name in characters of fire upon my heart; that nothing may have the power to efface them! Let it be my strength, my support, and my hope; may it be my defence against temptation, my protection against dangers; my help and consolation in all the trials and troubles of this life; and may I carry it in my soul as a sign of holiness, in order to wear it upon my forehead hereafter, as a mark of triumph and glory. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

Boleslaus the Fourth, King of Poland, had engraven upon a plate of gold, the image of his father, whom he always venerated: he wore it suspended from his neck, and when he was to say or do any thing of importance, he took this image, and kissing it respectfully, said: "My father, I wish I may not do any thing unworthy of your name." Would not Christians be much more reserved in their words and actions if, carrying about

them the image of Jesus crucified, they would look at it and say, like this great king, when they would be in danger of sullying their innocence: O my Divine Saviour, never permit me to do any thing unworthy thy disciple.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE III. OF JANUARY.

Power of the Name of Jesus.

Do you recollect, dear child, the subject of yesterday's meditation? This question may, perhaps embarrass you. I should not be surprised if your memory, lively and fresh as it is, could not retain it all. However, it is well worthy of being remembered. The reflections to which it gave rise in your mind, and the good resolutions which were the fruit of it, do not permit me to fear that it will ever be entirely effaced from your soul. The adorable Name of Jesus is too deeply engraven upon your heart. But from the momentary forgetfulness I draw a conclusion, the justice of which you will at once acknowledge, that is, the necessity of frequently returning to the same subject, because a first consideration, so to speak, only

serves to present it to the mind. It is for that same reason that, in all the arts, the sciences, and even in the exercise of mechanical professions, we frequently go over what we have read, learned, and even taught to others. The more we know, the more convinced we are that we have still much to learn.

Why, therefore, do not men apply with similar zeal to the study of religion? Ah, my dear child, I must inform you of the true reasons: it is because in general they esteem neither their own souls, nor the holy truths which are calculated to nourish and strengthen them, at their true value. You will be no longer surprised at this when you have read these reflections upon the name of Jesus, to which I once more call your attention.

You remember that yesterday you were instructed in the different significations of that Divine name. These holy considerations inspired you with profound sentiments of veneration and gratitude. You must add to these to-day that of boundless confidence, for the power of the name of Jesus is so great, that if you are faithful in invoking it, if you keep it ever in your thoughts, if love frequently recalls it to your heart, you will not only triumph with facility over the greatest temptations, but you will walk in the road of

virtue with a joyful assurance, of which you can at present form no idea.

See, in the Gospel, how that mysterious name is always intermingled with the merciful prodigies performed by the Saviour, and in the promises which He made to His disciples, of the still greater wonders which they were one day to accomplish. During His mortal life His name is the terror of devils. It torments and puts them to flight. It is the hope of the afflicted, of the sick, of all those who suffer; they invoke it, and are cured and delivered from distress. In the name of Jesus, we should ask and obtain all things. *Whatever you shall ask of the Father in my name He will give it you*, says Jesus Christ Himself. It is by His name that those who believe and are baptized shall be saved. *In my name*, He adds, *they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover.*

You know, dear child, with what fidelity these magnificent promises have been accomplished; the first time, in favor of a poor lame man, seated at the gate of the Temple, to whom St. Peter addressed these startling words: *In the*

name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise and walk. Then in the case of a paralytic named Eneas, who dwelt in Lydda, and of a pious widow of Joppa, named Tabitha, whose death had greatly afflicted the Christians of that city, and whom the same Apostle raised from the dead. Those wonders were renewed in the Church from age to age, in an external and visible manner, as long as they were necessary for the establishment of the Faith, and for the conversion of the Gentiles. They are still daily renewed in an invisible, though no less wonderful manner, in the conversion of sinners, in the fidelity of pure and innocent hearts, and in the perseverance of the just. Such are the miracles which the holy spouse of God constantly demands, and ceases not to obtain for her children, because she asks them in the name of Jesus Christ, which she places at the end of all her prayers.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the power of His Holy Name.

The Child.—Divine Jesus! at each step which I take in seeking You, and in endeavoring to attain a thorough knowledge of Your adorable Infancy, I discover that, truly, I knew You not. How many times have I not pronounced Your

all-powerful name, without suspecting all that it comprised within it?

THE INFANT JESUS.—Ah, my child! it is the misfortune of the generality of Christians, and the fatal cause of the loss of so great a number, that they do not know me, because they will not study either my life, my doctrines, or the truths which I brought down from Heaven.

THE CHILD.—O my Saviour! do not suffer so great a misfortune to fall on me; teach me what I must do to know and serve You.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, it is not by books, nor in the schools of earthly masters, that you will learn to know me. If you really desire it, and will ask the grace of me, the Holy Ghost will enlighten your heart; He will unfold to you the secrets of my name, and will teach you to pronounce it in an efficacious manner.

THE CHILD.—It seems to me, dear Lord, that I am animated with that desire, and that sentiment cannot but be the effect of Your grace.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Well, then, Christian child, preserve it carefully, and with that end in view, contract the pious custom of pronouncing my name in a true spirit of faith upon awakening in the morning, and on going to sleep at night, at the beginning and end of your principal

actions, in your temptations and sorrows; carry it about you, place it near your bed, in your prayer-books, and press it frequently to your lips; it will keep, strengthen, and console you, and it will operate its significance in your soul, for Jesus means Saviour.

PRACTICE.

Invoke with confidence the name of Jesus.

PRAYER.

O Jesus! how dearly has my salvation cost You! At what a price, and by what effusion of blood have You earned the title of Saviour! Save me then from sin and eternal death, since for that purpose You received the name of Jesus. It is the terror of Hell; it is the strength and consolation of the Faithful in their combats; it is the joy of saints, who celebrate its everlasting glory. O name of strength! I will invoke You in all my dangers upon the sea of this world, and I hope one day to praise You with the Blessed in Heaven. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

It is related in the Life of St. Edmund, of Abingdon, afterward Archbishop of Canterbury,

that, being one day in the country, with the other boys, his companions, as he was fond of prayer and solitude, he separated from them in order to walk alone in the meadows, to meditate and entertain himself with devout aspirations toward Jesus Christ. Behold, a beautiful Infant appeared to him, and saluted him with, "God bless you, my dear Edmund!" and then asked him if he knew who "He was?" Edmund answered that he did not. He then said, "I wonder that I should be unknown to you, since I always sit by your side in school, and am constantly in your company, and follow you wherever you go. If you desire to know me, look at my forehead." Edmund did so, and read on His forehead these words, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." The child then added, "This is my name; and I desire, that in remembrance of the love I bear you, you should every night sign your forehead with this name, and it shall deliver you from sudden death; as it will also deliver every one who shall do the same." Edmund ever after signed himself with the name of Jesus. On one occasion the Devil seized his hands, in order to prevent his doing so; but he conquered him by prayer, and then constrained him to tell him what was the weapon he feared most; the Devil

replied, that it was those words with which he signed his forehead.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE IV. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus draws children toward the consideration of His first mysteries.

ALTHOUGH neither the Holy Scriptures nor tradition speak of children as being round our Saviour's manger, it must be consoling to such a heart as yours, dear child, to think that God, who deigned to humble Himself to the state of infancy, must have crowned His mercy, by drawing to Him, by His grace, the innocent hearts of those whose age and condition he had embraced. Why should we not picture to ourselves a true daughter of Abraham, led by faith to seek out her new-born King, and present her infant to receive His blessing? How shall we believe that the Saviour, who has shown so tender a love for childhood and youth, would not have enlightened some young souls with a ray of divine light, and revealed Himself to them as He did formerly to Samuel? Was not the first confident of the mystery of His In-

carnation a child yet in his mother's womb? Were not the Holy Innocents His first martyrs? However that may be, dear child, it is certain that the mysteries of the Holy Infancy should possess a powerful attraction for all young hearts, and produce in those who are happy enough to respond to it, two precious effects, namely, the love and imitation of the Infant Jesus.

What more charming sight than that of an infant sleeping in its cradle, or smiling in its mother's arms? What more delightful than to see a child, at the first dawnings of reason, touched by the sight of a poor person, or shedding tears over some slight action of kindness, or when, led by his pious mother to some church, he pours forth his pure and innocent desires, at the foot of the Altar. But if the gifts, which the goodness of God sheds so abundantly upon children's earliest years, have so charming an effect, judge, dear child, what they must have been in that Adorable Infant, *who lived amongst us full of grace and truth?* How can you contemplate his beauty without being irresistibly drawn toward him? When you behold him, scarcely born, yet already weeping for your sins, and offering the first shedding of His precious blood to expiate them, can you refuse Him your love? And when, holding out his hands

to you, from His crib, He seems to say: *My child, give me your heart;* does not your heart burn to say to Him, with St. Bernard: "O, most loving Saviour! what can I refuse to your sighs and tears? The more you have humbled yourself for me, the dearer you are to me."

As soon, dear child, as the Infant Jesus shall have drawn you to His love, you will feel inclined to imitate Him. Every thing pleases us in those we love; therefore we frequently copy, without knowing it, their manners, walk, and even accents. Thus, when you have become attached to the loving mysteries which will exemplify in all their perfection those virtues suited to your age, you will feel the desire to imitate them, or at least to offer some slight impression of them in your life; because your heart being open to the love of Jesus, you will wish to resemble Him. His patience, His sweetness, His humility, and His punctual obedience, will be your favorite study and the constant objects of your imitation; and that God, who loves children, before whom even a good desire is not without its reward, will bestow upon you the blessings of His grace, and accomplish in you that resemblance which your own weakness could only sketch, as it were. Dear child, if at the price of your fidelity to some few practices as sweet as

they are easy, you can obtain the overthrow of a single vice, the acquisition of one virtue, or the victory over that predominant passion which has so long been the origin of all your faults, and the source of all your sorrows, what happiness would be yours! You must ask it with confidence of your Saviour; but that is not enough. Your soul should reflect, as in a faithful mirror, His Divine Image, and you should, as it were, reproduce Him in your thoughts, affections and conduct, since every Christian should be another Jesus Christ.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the mysteries of His Infancy.

THE CHILD.—My Saviour! what I have just heard gives me the desire to apply myself to the study of the mysteries of Your adorable childhood.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, one of the most precious privileges of your age is that of loving truth and virtue, and being inclined readily to observe them; but that impulse is quickly stopped, and frequently gives place to directly opposite impressions.

THE CHILD.—Divine Jesus! what attractions can compare to those of the mysteries of Your childhood? All connected with them touches my

heart; the mere contemplation of You in Your crib or in Your Blessed Mother's arms, causes me a feeling of joy quite new to me.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, that is but the first drop of the dew which I will shower down upon your soul, if it is docile to the inspirations of my grace. I am prodigal in my gifts to those of your age; their innocence and simplicity forcibly attract me.

THE CHILD.—Dear Lord, I am utterly unworthy of Your slightest favors, since I am already far from innocent; but deign, nevertheless, to render more lively the desire that I experience to know and to love You.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Persevere in that disposition, O child of God! address that prayer to me frequently, and you will taste how sweet the Lord is. Have I not told you that *He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

PRACTICE.

Constantly meditate upon the mysteries of the Holy Infancy.

PRAYER.

By Your grace, Divine Saviour, I begin to taste

the sweetness hidden in the first mysteries of Your Incarnate Life. I feel myself drawn to contemplate them; my heart frequently recalls my mind to that holy occupation. Be a thousand times blessed, O Lord! since every good thought and every useful sentiment are the effect of your grace. Render that impression lasting, I conjure You, make it to bring forth fruits worthy of salvation, in order, that, following You step by step, I may avoid the snares of the world and its passions, and may finally arrive at Your Eternal Kingdom. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

Father Nadasi relates, that the devotion of sending about the image of the Infant Jesus to the nuns, each one having it one day, having been introduced into a monastery, one of the Virgins whose turn it was, after having spent a long time in prayer, at the close of the evening took the image and shut it up in a little closet. But she had hardly lain down to sleep when she heard the Holy Infant knocking at the door of the closet; she therefore got out of bed, and having replaced the image on her little altar, she prayed again for a very long time. She then shut it up again, but the Infant again knocked; again she took it out

and prayed. At last, weary with sleep, she went and rested herself on the bed, and slept till day-break; and on awakening she blessed this night passed in holy conversation with her Beloved.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE V. OF JANUARY.

Upon the opposition shown toward the mysteries of the Holy Infancy.

You have, no doubt, dear child, met with shrubs upon which persons have amused themselves by engraving words, and you may have noticed that, far from becoming effaced by the growth of the tree, on the contrary they grow and enlarge with it. So it is with good or bad impressions when received in early life; they continue more or less vivid, and always exercise some influence upon the remainder of our lives. It is therefore a great blessing for you to be alive from your earliest years to the sweet attractions of piety, and to enjoy the consolation it affords. The truly Christian emotion which yesterday's meditation enkindled in your heart is a happy omen of your perseverance, and gives me ground to hope, that you will

always find your joy as well as strength, in the touching mysteries of the Infancy of Jesus, and that they will quickly draw you back to His love, should the world and its allurements temporarily detach you from His service.

This last supposition afflicts you, dear child; the idea of adding to the sorrows, of multiplying the tears of your Infant God, presents itself to you under the colors of an ingratitude and new barbarity which wounds your heart. Blessed be God a thousand times, and may His mercy engrave deeply on your soul so pious and just a sentiment! But, however, it is necessary to convince yourself fully of two important truths; the first is, that nothing is more inconstant than man's will, above all during the first years of life; and the second is, that the mysteries of the Holy Infancy, luminous and attractive though they be, can, and too often do encounter, even in youthful hearts, the strongest opposition. Without doubt, dear child, grace can triumph, and often does triumph, over the inconstancy of man's heart; and all seems to say to me that it will preserve you in fidelity. But it is not the less true, that frivolity and levity cause the happiest hopes to fade away in numberless souls, and that the mysteries which delight your piety to-day, will soon lose all charm and sweetness for

those who sully their innocence. Let the voice of the passions once be heard in the heart, it will represent to it the requirements of those mysteries so redoubtable for pride and sensuality, and love of the world, and will even exaggerate their rigor and difficulties. We no longer remark that the Incarnate Word, whilst offering to us in the Divine Infancy, the model of the highest virtues, merited for us the grace to imitate them, that He facilitated the practice not only by His example, but still more by the strength and sweetness which he pours into the soul who endeavors to follow it. We see but the poverty of the stable of Bethlehem, we feel but the hardness of the manger, we hear only the weeping, moaning, and sighing of the sorrowing child, who from his first coming into this world, calls all who wish to walk in His footsteps, to tears and penance. Join to those ideas the growing taste for pleasure, vanity, luxury, the love of gain, the desire of pleasing, of having the first place in society, in a word all those first propensities which have such influence over childhood and youth, and you can form some idea of the opposition they present to those mysteries, those humiliations, and that prodigious self-abasement of a God made man.

It is far from being my intention, dear child, to

discourage your weakness, or to mingle bitterness with the pure consolation which you taste at the feet of the Infant Jesus. But it is very important for you to be early forewarned against the seductions of the world and its passions. Never forget, therefore, that when Religion begins to speak less powerfully to your heart, some enemy's voice must have penetrated therein, and that the only means to escape the danger, is to redouble your vigilance and your fidelity in the accomplishment of your duties.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the opposition to the mysteries of Faith.

THE CHILD.—Can it be possible, dearest Saviour, that these mysteries of Your Holy Childhood which now penetrate me with such sweet sentiments, can some day become a subject of scandal for me?

THE INFANT JESUS.—Alas, my child! of what excess is not the misery of the human heart capable? At which one of my actions were men not scandalized?

THE CHILD.—O God of Love! they were at least never scandalized at your Divine Infancy!

THE INFANT JESUS.—O Christian child! you are very excusable in not comprehending such

monstrous perversity. It is nevertheless true that men blushed at the state of humiliation and weakness in which I made my entrance into the world.

THE CHILD.—O King of Glory! perhaps they lamented that annihilation of Your majesty.

THE INFANT JESUS.—O Child of Adam! you do not understand that such abasement was useful for the salvation of men; it was worthy of me, since nothing is more fitting for the Creator of man than to redeem men. Their pride was the true cause of their opposition to my humble state of life.

THE CHILD.—O my Divine Master! deign to explain that truth to me.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Men who passionately loved wealth, rank, and pleasure, repulsed an humble, poor and suffering Saviour, who obliged them to take pattern from His example, and who condemned their favorite desires from His very birth.

THE CHILD.—Be ever blessed, O Light of Souls! Why did I not recognize those deplorable causes of sin, since by the assistance of your grace, I can discover the seed of them in my own heart? Heal me, O my God! Reform my corrupt propensities, and Your mysteries shall find no more opposition within my soul.

PRACTICE.

Fight generously against your predominant passions.

PRAYER.

Can it be, O my Divine Master! that Your mysteries, the remembrance of which renders me so happy to-day, can ever become a subject of scandal for me? Most loving Redeemer! rather let me die a thousand deaths than meet with so great a misfortune. But since it is my evil propensities which excite my heart to rebel against Your Holy Law, and arms my mind against the Faith, grant me the grace to combat them steadily, until I reach that abode where You will crown those who shall have fought generously during this life. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

It is related in the Flowery Meadow, that a devout lady wished to know what souls were the dearest to Jesus. One day, whilst she was hearing mass, at the elevation of the Sacred Host, she saw the Infant Jesus on the altar, and with Him three young virgins. Jesus took the first, and caressed her very much. He went to the second, and having taken her veil off her face, He struck her severely on the cheek, and turned His back

upon her; but soon after, seeing the child look sorrowful, He comforted her with all sorts of kindness. At last, He approached the third; He seized her by the arm, as if He were angry, struck her, and drove her away from Him; but the more she saw herself ill-used and driven off, the more the little virgin humbled herself and followed Him; and thus the vision ended. This devout woman remained in the church with great desire to know what was the meaning of the vision. Jesus appeared to her again, and told her that there are on earth three sorts of souls who love Him. Some love Him, but their love is so weak that if they are not coaxed by spiritual pleasures they become uneasy, and are in danger of turning their backs upon Him; of these, the first virgin was a figure. The second represented those souls who love Him with a less feeble love, but who require to be comforted from time to time. The third was a figure of those more courageous souls who, although constantly desolate and deprived of spiritual consolations, do not cease doing all they can to please their Lord; and these, He said, were the souls in which He took the greatest delight.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE VI. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus attracts the Magi by means of a Star.

How admirable is the Christian religion, dear child, whether we contemplate it as a whole, or whether we study it in detail; how perfectly it all harmonizes and accords. Thus, since the Son of God, who came to repair man's crime and reform his evil propensities, was, from His entrance into life, to announce and, so to speak, consecrate poverty, obscurity and suffering, the poor and little ones of the earth were to be the first instructed of *the good news*, and allowed the happiness of beholding Him. But as He was to be also the Saviour of all mankind, it was necessary that the great, rich, and learned should be called in their turn; and they were consequently miraculously led to His feet. Peace was first to be announced to those near at hand—that is, to the Jews, children of the Promise; then to those at a distance—that is, to the Gentiles; and see the admirable order in which they are called, one after the other. His predilection for Israel is shown by the calling of the Shepherds; but His mercy also shines upon the Gentiles in the persons of the Magi, whom it

seeks in a distant land, where the true God was not known, and where the Messiah was not expected. Remark also, dear child, that the Magi, like the Shepherds, required light from above to enlighten and direct them; and that without faith, of which that extraordinary light was the image, neither learning nor science can teach you to know Jesus Christ, nor lead you to Him.

Perhaps, my child, you will ask, What was that star which guided the Magi toward the birthplace of the Divine Saviour? I could answer you that that question is one over whose solution the wise ones of this world have wasted both time and trouble, since they could never arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. It is enough for you, as a Christian, to know and believe in all simplicity, that a star appeared to the Wise Men in the East; that while gazing upon it they felt interiorly impelled to seek Him whose birth it announced; and that it directed their steps, faithfully pointing out the road which led them to the place where the Messiah was born. But since every thing connected with the mysteries of the Divine Infancy is worthy of attention, and that you are seeking your own edification, rather than the gratification of idle curiosity, it will not be unprofitable to tell you some of the numerous sur-

mises based upon the apparition of that miraculous star. No one, as I have yet heard, has sustained that it was either a fixed star or a planet, whose places, as well as their revolutions in the firmament are well known. Some have thought that God created it for that express purpose; others, that an angel, clothed with a body which shone like a star, went before the Magi to direct their steps; others again, and such seems the general impression, think that heavenly sign to have been a brilliant meteor to which an angel had given the form of a star, and which, suspended in mid-air, was driven by him from east to west, as was formerly the column of fire which went before the Israelites to guide them across the desert. Be that as it may, dear child, such opinions are of no moment. The only important point for a Christian is, to consider in that star the double light of faith and grace; of faith which points out the road to us; and of grace which gives us the strength to walk therein with fidelity, if we would arrive at the promised reward. If you will draw this conclusion from those considerations, my child, you will recognize that the *Star of Jacob* has shone more than once for you, that its light still shines in your soul, but that its splendor is frequently obscured, and its

purposes frustrated, by the little attention paid to it, and the want of zeal to follow its inspirations. Beg, therefore, the Infant Jesus to bestow upon you an attentive mind and a docile heart.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the Star which appeared to the Magi.

THE CHILD.—What mercy You have shown, dear Lord, from the first moment of Your birth! You deigned even to instruct idolatrous men who had no claim to so great a favor.

THE INFANT JESUS.—What man, my child, even the most righteous and faithful among my disciples, can claim as a right the least of my graces? It is I who, through mercy, give them both light and good desires; and without me, neither could the human mind discern the truth, nor human hearts be turned toward my service.

THE CHILD.—But, my Divine Master! how did the Magi, from merely seeing that star in the heavens, understand that You had come into the world?

THE INFANT JESUS.—Without doubt, that star which attracted their attention could not give them that information; but at the same moment that I caused it to appear before their eyes, *the*

light of Christ shone upon their souls, and revealed to them the mystery of my birth.

THE CHILD.—O my Saviour! since You have bestowed upon me the gift of faith, of which that star was the image, deign further to give me that heartfelt desire which will urge me ever toward You.

THE INFANT JESUS.—O my child! your good desire is already the effect of my grace, and an inspiration of my Holy Spirit. Purify your affections; disengage yourself from the vanities which, obscuring your soul, prevent my Divine light from penetrating into it; leave, once for all, those childish occupations which turn your attention from piety; listen to the voice which is constantly heard in the depths of your conscience; and, finally, *come forth from your infancy, live and walk in the paths of wisdom.*

THE CHILD.—Most loving Jesus, it is sweet for me to obey so tender an invitation; but behold my weakness, inconstancy and ignorance. Cradled in illusions, I have hitherto loved trifles; I have lived only a sensual life; but if You will take pity on me, You can change my heart, You can sustain me, draw me to Your love, and attach me so closely to You that nothing can be capable of separating me from You.

PRACTICE.

Often thank God for the grace of vocation to the Faith.

PRAYER.

What happiness for me, O my Divine Saviour! to have been born of Christian parents, and in the bosom of the Catholic Church; to have been nourished with the milk of the true Faith, and sent to pious schools to be instructed in the practice of Your commandments, and in the imitation of Your virtues! If, with such powerful helps, I still find myself inclined toward evil, what would I have been had I been born in error, and given up to my wicked inclinations? Preserve in me, O Jesus! these fruits of Your mercy; and may Your Divine light lead me onward to the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

We read in the life of St. Hubert, that in his twentieth year, he was one day going to hunt whilst the people were going to the church; but scarcely had he commenced following a great stag, than the animal stood still. Hubert, astonished, fixed his eyes upon him, when he perceived between his horns the image of Jesus crucified,

and heard a voice which said to him: "If you are not converted, and lead a better life, you will soon descend into hell." At these words, he leaped from his horse, and throwing himself on his knees, adored the Lord who had appeared to him, and going to Maestricht, placed himself under the direction of St. Lambert, the Bishop of that city, and became converted.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE VII. OF JANUARY.

Upon the Magi.

"Were the Magi sovereign kings, or dependent upon a larger empire? Were they merely great lords, who were styled kings after the custom of their country, or were they only wise men, philosophers, or doctors of the law, among the Persians, Parthians, or in some part of that empire known as the East? You think, perhaps, that I am about to settle your doubts and gratify your curiosity; but you deceive yourself—I have not taken up my pen to teach you the thoughts of men. I will simply tell you that they were wise men and astronomers in their own country, whom

God drew to Himself, rich and powerful, as their gifts testify; if they were teachers of religion, God had made Himself known to them, and they had renounced the worship of idols.

"But from whence did they come? From far or near? Did they perform their journey during the few days which elapsed between the Nativity and the Epiphany, as the ancient tradition of the Church seems to imply? Or is there something hidden from us? Did they come from a distance, warned, perhaps, before the birth of the Great King, in order to arrive at the stated time? Who can say, and what would it avail us to know? Is it not sufficient to understand that they came from the land of ignorance, from the midst of the heathen, where God was not known, and Christ neither promised nor expected? Nevertheless, guided by light from on high, they came in search of God, and His Christ, and were the first-fruits from among the Gentiles.

"Finally, what was the number of the Magi? Many ancient writers say three. I know not if tradition informs us precisely; but, after all, what matters it to us? It is enough for us to know that they were *of that number known to God; of that little number, of that little troop which God has chosen.* Consider the great extent of the

Eastern Empire, then that of the entire universe. God at first called but a few persons, and when the number of those who serve Him shall have been augmented, that number, though great in itself, will be small in comparison with the infinite multitudes who will be lost forever. You are sometimes tempted to incredulity at the sight of the small number of those who are saved. *Who art thou, O man! who darest to question God,* and ask the reasons of His actions? Profit by the grace which is offered to you, and leave to God the knowledge of His judgments. The Magi did not say to themselves: Let us not go, for why did not God call all men, as well as ourselves? But they went, they saw, they adored God; they presented Him their gifts, and were saved."

You have doubtlessly perceived, dear child, from the commencement of this Meditation, that it was not I who was speaking to you. This passage from the writings of Bossuet, the great Bishop of Meaux, struck me as being so simple, yet so instructive, that I would not deprive you of the pleasure of reading it at length. It also seemed to me to enter so perfectly into the frame-work of the truths which occupy your minds just at present, that it would but imprint them more closely upon your mind, coming from the pen of so great

a master. He has told you, so far as it was possible to conjecture, who the Magi were; their country, and the number which came to Bethlehem. But what is still more important, he has taught you not to attach yourself too closely to merely curious researches; and that, even while asking God's light to enable you to discern articles of faith, you must, above all, beg Him to give you humility and docility of heart.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the dispositions requisite for the study of Religion.

The Child.—Divine Saviour! the habitual occupation of the Magi, and the grace which You bestowed upon them in calling them to visit You, inspire me with a desire to study Your divine mysteries; but I fear lest my intentions be not sufficiently pure.

The Infant Jesus.—It is a great happiness for a soul even to conceive the desire of advancing on the road of faith; for, naturally, the spirit of man darkened by sin, rather inclines toward earthly than seeks after heavenly things.

The Child.—My good master! I but too often find that same inclination in myself, since, even whilst contemplating the wonders of your adorable

infancy, I suffer myself to be distracted by curious thoughts, and so lose sight of you.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My dear child, it is only in heaven, where your soul will be absorbed in the clear light of truth, that nothing will be able to divert you from its ravishing contemplation. In this valley of darkness and illusions, you can never entirely detach your mind from earthly ideas, even in the midst of the efforts it makes to elevate itself toward God.

THE CHILD.—God of love, your goodness reassures me, but teach me what I am to do in order to apply myself with profit to the study of Religion.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Never study either through curiosity or vanity, dear child; neither merely to satisfy yourself, nor to be more learned than your companions. But since no man can love God without knowing Him, nor know Him without loving Him, let the acquisition of that *supereminent science* be the principal and continual end of all your care. Remember frequently, that knowledge is not the fruti of man's labor, but the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the recompense of humility, simplicity, and purity of heart.

PRACTICE.

Apply with zeal, humility, and uprightness, to the study of Religion.

PRAYER.

Divine Lord! I know You not, and I am powerless, through my own unaided efforts, to raise myself to the knowledge of Your adorable majesty. Nevertheless, I cannot live without knowing You, nor reach Your kingdom without learning the road which leads thither. I am only a child, and a sinful one; but You are my God, my Creator, my all, and You only created me to know and love You. You are my life and my light. Incline toward me, therefore, O uncreated Light! Communicate Yourself to my soul, since You are its life, in order that I may begin to love and serve You here below, and thus merit to possess You in heaven. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

We read in the life of Blessed Albertus Magnus, that in his early years he was so dull of comprehension as to be nicknamed the Ass, by his companions; he entered the Dominican Convent, at Padua, and at the end of two years his faculties

not improving, he decided to retire secretly into the wilderness, in order to hide his griefs in the bosom of his God. He made a promise to the Blessed Virgin, to whom he was tenderly devoted, and at the end of it, having placed himself under her protection, was about to carry his design into execution, when Our Lady appeared to him, and asked him what he wanted, when he replied, "The gift of wisdom." Which she granted to him, telling him that *it should be withdrawn from him the moment it seemed likely to become dangerous to him.* He immediately became as celebrated for his learning as he had previously been for his dulness and stupidity, received the title of *The* Philosopher, and became celebrated throughout all countries for his wonderful powers of mind, and was elected vicar-general of the Order of St. Dominic in 1236, and its General in 1238. Being sent to Cologne to teach Divinity, one day, while preaching to an immense congregation, he was tempted to pride in his great acquirements, when his memory suddenly deserted him, and he fell into his former state of dulness. He understood the warning, and instantly prepared for death, which he received piously two years after, on the 15th of November, 1282.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE VIII. OF JANUARY.

The Magi leave their own country.

In order that you can form a just idea of the generous sacrifice of the Magi, and of the wisdom of their conduct in the important journey they undertook, and which now occupies your attention, it will not be useless, dear child, for you to meditate, in the first place, upon the miraculous star, and upon the state and condition of the persons to whom it was sent. Whatever opinion you may have formed regarding them, whether you look upon them as kings, princes, or sages, they are still powerful men, who renounced, from no motives of self-interest, glory, or pleasure, the delights of a comfortable life; for which extraordinary enterprise, the apparition of the celestial sign will give a sufficient reason. From thence, my dear child, result two great lessons, firstly, that when God demands something difficult of us, His goodness always proportions His succor to the troubles to be surmounted; and secondly, that when we are convinced that He requires some

sacrifice from us, nothing should hinder our obedience to Him.

The journey of the Magi was a more difficult enterprise that is commonly imagined; and the more closely you examine their determination, the more you will be convinced of the strength of their conviction and their courage and readiness of will. They were obliged to quit their homes, their comfortable habits, their business and their families, and to undertake a long journey through an unknown country, and among a people whose dispositions, to say the least, might be unfavorable. And for what reason? to seek an Infant King whose birth had been announced to them by means of a star. But are they the only ones whose eyes have seen its light? Why should they hazard so much more than their neighbors? What will be said of an enterprise based upon the faith of an uncertain star? Would it not be wiser to wait, to seek some further information? Such, dear child, would have been the reasoning of a less generous and more wavering faith. The Magi, happily for themselves, did not reason in that manner.

Docile to the inspirations of grace, they turned a deaf ear to all vain considerations which might hinder their pious design: they bade a joyful

adieu both to those who blamed and pitied them, and to those who secretly laughed at their simplicity; they left all their possessions without regret, because something seemed to say confusedly to their hearts that they would find all that they needed. Finally, they set out, preceded by their heavenly guide. Imagine, dear child, how attentively they kept their eyes upon it, with what consolation and religious ardor they followed it. What must have been their conversations, their prayers and their transports of admiration and gratitude.

Such is the touching picture of a truly Christian life, that is to say, when enlightened and guided by faith. For what is life, dear child, but a journey, which is never a very long one? Pilgrim toward the Heavenly Jerusalem, has not the star shone upon you also? Leave, then, this land of darkness; and by means of holy thoughts and good desires, which are the steps of the heart, walk by the light of faith; never lose sight of her for a moment, and she will certainly lead you to your journey's end.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the setting out of the Magi.

THE CHILD.—My Saviour! I have never before

reflected upon what their obedience to the call of Your grace must have cost the Magi.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Without doubt, my dear child, obedience always imposes some sacrifice upon the heart of man; because his will has been perverted by sin; but the more prompt and generous it is, the less effort it requires, and the more merit it procures.

THE CHILD.—But, dear Lord, when You so kindly sweeten the sacrifices we make for Your love, how can they increase our merits?

THE INFANT JESUS.—It is true, my child, that man's docility is the effect of my grace; but, as it is also a free act and co-operation of his will, I impute it to his good heart; thus, whilst crowning his merits, I also crown my own gifts.

THE CHILD.—It seems to me, however, O my Divine Master! that had I seen the miraculous star, and had an interior voice assured me that it would guide me to Your feet, I would have counted as nothing, either distance of country, the railleries of men, or the fatigues and dangers of a long journey.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Thus, it is, dear child, that men speak when far from the occasion of trial, and yet how little does it require to shake their constancy and draw them into infidelity; a

little privation imposed by humility, charity, or penance, a raillery, a frivolous fear. Perseverance is daily shipwrecked against a grain of sand.

THE CHILD.—O my Divine Master! pardon my blindness and presumption. Those few words comprise the whole history of my life, and paint but too clearly the weakness of my heart. Dearest Lord, *enlighten my darkness* and save me.

PRACTICE.

Make daily some little sacrifice to God.

PRAYER.

My dearest Lord! it is but too true that when far from the occasion of trial, and when nothing is required but promises and words, I believe myself disposed to quit all for love of You, and yet the time of temptation almost always finds me cowardly and unfaithful. Strengthen, therefore, I beseech You, O my Sovereign Master, my will so powerless for good, render my attachment to Your service more constant and generous, in order that henceforward, when the voice of Your grace is heard in my soul, no obstacle may be capable of hindering my progress toward You. **Amen.**

EXAMPLE.

William of Malmesbury tells us, in his History of the Kings of England, that King Edward the Elder, had a daughter named Eadburga, who, when she was scarcely three years old, gave a singular indication of her future sanctity. Her father was inclined to try whether the little girl was inclined to God or to the world, and had placed in a chamber the symbols of different professions; on one side a chalice and the gospels; on the other bracelets and necklaces. Hither the child was brought in the arms of her attendant, and sitting on her father's knee was desired to choose which she pleased. Rejecting the earthly ornaments with stern regard, she instantly fell prostrate before the chalice and gospels, and worshipped them with infant adoration. The company present exclaimed aloud, and fondly hailed the child's future sanctity; while her father embraced her in an endearing manner, and, rejoicing in her choice, bade her follow whither the Divinity called her. She became in due time a nun at Winchester, and was afterward canonized by the Church.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE IX. OF JANUARY.

The arrival of the Magi at Jerusalem.

It is not only at the beginning of his career that a Christian is exposed to temptation in order to deter him from entering upon his journey, or to persuade him to retrace his steps. He must expect to meet it at every turn during his route, and keep himself ever in an attitude of defence against its attacks; it is often when the greater difficulties have been overcome, and he seems about to reap the fruit of his victories, that it appears most threatening and dangerous, so that until the day of his death he must watch vigilantly, and, distrusting himself, seek his salvation and deliverance from the power of grace alone. The trials reserved for the Magi on their arrival at Jerusalem, will prove to you, dear child, the solidity and importance of these reflections.

It certainly seems to us, that, after tearing themselves away from their own country and passing so happily through so many unknown regions, they must have triumphed over the obstacles most to be dreaded; and that, once arrived in Jerusalem,

the capital city of the new-born King, whom they came from such a distance to seek, every one would be eager to aid them in their search after Him. But all turned out quite differently. That hidden God who had attracted them and led them miraculously so far upon their journey, wished to prove their fidelity before rewarding it, and *to instruct by the example of their patience those who were one day to be the inheritors of their faith.* Think, now, dear child, to what trouble, inquietude, and discouragement you would have given way, had your fidelity been exposed to the same trials which they had to undergo. The first was, their apparent abandonment by Heaven. Scarcely have they entered Jerusalem, when the tutelary star which had guided them ever since their setting out, in so sure a manner, suddenly leaves them; the star disappeared. Yet in what place and under what circumstances could its light be more necessary to the Magi, than in that city, as they knew neither its king, its people, its language, nor its customs? Had they not just cause for alarm in that sudden disappearance of their Heavenly guide? Had they deceived themselves, and taken a common meteor, a simple freak of nature, for a miraculous preadmonition? But no, faith which is alone capable of reassuring the heart of man, could

not, I do not say, induce trouble, but even suffer it to reign therein; and that it was which inspired them with the courageous thought of asking openly: *Where was the new-born King of the Jews?*

The second trial was the fear of the anger of Herod, upon hearing both of their arrival in his dominions and of the cause of their journey thither. Would he not see in those strangers dangerous enemies for his people, and treat them accordingly? But the Magi experienced no alarm. They were not more disconcerted by the emotion which their question and its answer excited in Jerusalem, and at the court of Herod, than they had been by the heedlessness with which the people had formerly listened to the news of so important an event. They thought only of profiting by the grace bestowed upon them. Without stopping for useless questions, they asked the only one necessary for the end they had in view: *Where is he that is born King of the Jews?* for we know of His birth. *We have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him;* and as soon as they heard the answer they set out without delay.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the conduct of the Magi in Jerusalem.

THE CHILD.—My Divine Saviour! Your judg-

ments are impenetrable, whether You bestow light upon us, or whether You withdraw it from us! but it is distressing to lose it.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, when men, through their own fault, lose the light of my grace, the sight of faith or the sentiments of my fear and love, they have but too much cause for sorrow; but when that subtraction is merely a trial, they should remain at peace.

THE CHILD.—But O Divine Jesus! how can I distinguish between the punishment and the trial?

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, the punishment generally follows quickly upon the sin, whether of negligence or infidelity; and the guilty heart easily recognizes it, unless it has become blinded and hardened by habitual and multiplied faults. But such trials are rare at your age, my mercy considers its weakness.

THE CHILD.—By what mark, dear Master, could I at once recognize the punishment? since I hope Your goodness will never permit me to fall into blindness and hardness of heart.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, have you never found yourself not only without relish for your religious duties, but without even any sentiment of piety, and feeling the greatest reluctance for the most indispensable practices required by the

Church? Nothing then reminded you of the presence of God; your heart was not raised toward Him either to adore, to praise or to bless Him. You passed whole days in that state, perhaps even weeks, uneasy and discontented with yourself and with others, and were only aroused by some serious fault, some exceedingly humiliating fall, which startled you and opened your eyes. That was the punishment of negligence and infidelity.

THE CHILD.—O my Divine Master! what was then my unhappiness! What internal disquietude and uneasiness I suffered during those days of fatal slumber, and what grief and anguish upon awakening.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, I have forgotten them all in my mercy, I blotted them out in your tears; but never forget them yourself: *see and know how bitter it is to have abandoned God*, and persevere in fervor and vigilance.

PRACTICE.

Confess your faith without ostentation and without human respect.

PRAYER.

O my God, what just reason I have to fear that false shame which has sometimes withheld

me from the performance of my duties, what ingratitude I should display if, after being overwhelmed with Your graces, I should abandon Your service through some paltry interest of vanity or pleasures. But what a terrible misfortune, since if I have the meanness to deny You before men, You will deny me before the face of Your Father in Heaven. No, no, dearest Master, it shall not be so. Whatever may happen, I will always confess You before men, that You may also confess me before Your Holy Angels. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

Romanus Diogenes, Emperor of the East, having haughtily refused the peace that the Sultan Olubarselan offered him through his ambassadors, and having attacked him with a part of his army, he was completely vanquished, and fell himself into the power of his enemy. One day that he was at the table of the Sultan, the latter asked him, "What would you have done to me if I had fallen into your power?" The Emperor frankly assured him, "I should have made you endure all kinds of torment." "Well," replied the Sultan, "I do not wish to imitate your cruelty, for I hear it said that your Jesus Christ commands peace and forgiveness of injuries, and that resisting the proud, He gives

His grace to the humble." He then made a perpetual peace with the Emperor, and having promised that he would never invade the Roman empire, he sent him back free, with all the Christian prisoners, as Baronius tells us.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE X. OF JANUARY.

The Magi leave Jerusalem.

YESTERDAY'S meditation, dear child, must have given you some idea of the trials to which the faith of the Magi was exposed after their arrival in Jerusalem. When we are strongly preoccupied with an object, and that object is an important one; when we have devoted to it both time and trouble, we are tempted to think that all the world should take a similar interest in it. From that fact you may judge of the astonishment of the traveller kings, when, upon the very theatre of the event which had led their steps from such a distance, they perceived that no one paid the slightest attention to it, although those to whom they spoke of it, knew perfectly well all the principal circumstances connected with its arrival. Add to this,

the disappearance of their heavenly guide, the distrust which they had conceived of Herod's intentions, and that of which they were themselves the object; all these things can give you some idea of their painful and embarrassing situation. And yet, perhaps, the most enticing trial to which they were exposed does not occur to your mind. Namely, that so renowned a city as Jerusalem must have contained thousands of objects well calculated to interest the curiosity of men so deeply versed in science as the Magi, while their opulence would furnish them the means to taste of its pleasures. The great fatigue they had undergone must also have prompted them to take rest; and during the interval devoted to such necessary relaxation, they might be enabled to convince themselves that they had not been deceived in the spot pointed out to them as the birthplace of the King of the Jews; and in case a snare had been laid for them, they might contrive to escape both the shame and danger of falling into it. Whether such reflections entered into their minds or no, it is certain that they did not delay their journey. As soon as they had heard the answer of the doctors of the law they hastened to take leave of the king and to turn their steps toward Bethlehem.

Happy are you, dear child, when you have gen-

erously resisted temptation; and the victory is the sweeter, in proportion as you realize that resistance was not so difficult as it appeared in the moment of trial, and the fruits thereof are the more delightful as you see clearly the dangerous consequences attending your defeat. Besides which, God almost always, in order to animate your constancy and encourage your weakness, immediately rewards your fidelity by some one of His consolations, which amply repays any sacrifice. That was sensibly experienced by the Magi. Scarcely had they left Jerusalem, when the heavenly sign reappeared before them to direct their path. What happiness for them to find in the return of its light, a fresh pledge of security and hope, to realize that their pious desires had not deceived them, that Heaven continued to approve their proceeding, and that its aid was assured to their faithful perseverance unto their journey's end.

Consider also their joy at having fulfilled their mission in the capital of Judea, at having been the first to proclaim the birth of the King of kings, at having neither been stopped by the fear of men, nor led astray by the seductions of the world and its allurements. Therefore the Gospel tells us *they rejoiced with exceeding great joy*, because at the moment when the heavenly sign re-enlightened

their eyes, that ray of grace which had previously shone upon their hearts, filled them with still greater joy and delight. Thus, dear child, the children of God have joy even in this valley of tears, and their joys are pure and without alloy. Those of the children of the world are always more or less mingled with bitterness and followed by remorse. Courageously resist temptation. The hour of trial will pass away, but the fruit of the victory will last forever.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the promptitude of the Magi in leaving Jerusalem.

THE CHILD.—Divine Saviour! it seems to me that the star, whilst reappearing to the eyes of the Magi, has brought back joy into my soul.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Do not be surprised, my child; the Gospel contains a principle of true enjoyment, which is communicated to faithful hearts, and, moreover, the fresh apparition of the miraculous star being but an image of that fulness of light into which the soul enters after leaving this world, hope causes it to assume the form of reality.

THE CHILD.—It is true, dear Lord, that frequently, while contemplating Your Divine works, I experience somewhat of those sentiments which animated those under whose eyes You performed them.

The Infant Jesus.—My child, my mysteries, doctrines, and miracles, concerned all times and places; in all that I did during my mortal life, I had in view all my disciples who should believe in me unto the consummation of the world.

The Child.—My Divine Master, the sight of the excessive joy which overwhelmed the Magi when the star reappeared to them, causes me to imagine their unhappiness whilst they were deprived of its light.

The Infant Jesus.—Every trial, my child, brings with it a feeling of regret, otherwise where would be its merit? but the joy which the return of the miraculous light caused the Magi was far greater than the sorrow caused by the privation of it, because I softened the pain, and heaped up the measure of their consolation. I wished to reveal in their persons the secret of my designs in the sacrifices which I impose upon my disciples.

The Child.—My dear Master, although You walked early through difficult roads, and invite us to follow You therein, bearing our cross daily, do You yet permit us to experience heartfelt joy?

The Infant Jesus.—Where should joy be found, dear child, save in a truly Christian heart? It is only in serving me that you can find peace, *that peace which passeth all understanding.* Which

were your happiest days, dear child? Surely they were not those wherein you only listened to your blind desires, and followed your own caprices. The happiest ones which ever shone upon you, were those days of piety and innocence which fled so swiftly in the accomplishment of your duties. Thus it is with all men. I have said it. *The reign of God is within you; and that reign is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

THE CHILD.—O my Saviour! how great is Your mercy. You wish me to serve You joyfully. How happy I am to be attached to the service of so good a Master! Deign to make me a good and faithful servant.

PRACTICE.

Avoid dangerous amusements.

PRAYER.

Dearest Saviour! behold the great and pressing danger which threatens me; the attractions of pleasure and the charms of idle amusements. In vain do I turn away mine eyes from them, they penetrate deeply into my soul, and begin to sow trouble therein, and yet, dear Lord, I have been told, and I know from experience, that worldly joys are deceptive. They cause us to lose peace,

and engender remorse. Divine Saviour, steel my heart against them, since it belongs to You alone. Fortify it, enlighten it, and render all earthly delights insipid to it, in order that it may find consolation and happiness in You alone. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

Father Francis Albertin relates, in his treatise on the Angel Guardian, that a young student studying at Zuolz, a town in the diocese of Utrecht, was one day in company with some libertines of his own age, who brought him to a house where, with the purity of his heart, he would have lost the flower of his virginity. However, grace rendering him victorious over the assaults of the devil, he left his companions, and quitted that house to return home in haste, for night had arrived. On his way home he thought of the danger he had just escaped, and the misfortune it would have been had he lost the precious treasure of his chastity. Whilst he reasoned thus, he beheld coming toward him a young man of wonderful beauty, who struck him with so much force that he was overthrown; at the same time addressed him thus: "Learn from hence to fly bad company." The student trembling, arose some time after, and, reflecting seriously on what had

passed, saw clearly that this young man was his guardian angel, whom God had sent to reprove him for his fault. Having made his thanksgiving to Jesus Christ, and to his good angel, he made a firm resolution to fly henceforth from all bad company.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XI. OF JANUARY.

The Star conducts the Magi to Bethlehem.

We have left the Magi, dear child, in the midst of their transports of joy, and we have ourselves shared in their consolation the more appropriately, since in this star, which was sent to lead them to the Redeemer, we have recognized that light of faith, the infallible guide of our earthly pilgrimage, and our firm support in the midst of the dangers of this world. Let us retrace our steps, and rejoin those loving and happy travellers, in order to gather instruction from the pious dispositions which animate them, and to join our adorations and offerings to those which they carried to the crib of the Infant Jesus.

Behold them, then, dear child, advancing with fresh ardor under the guidance of the star. It

goes before them; but the vivacity of their de sires leaves it far behind. In proportion as they approach the end of their journey, faith, hope, and divine love fill them with the sweetest sentiments of delight. Sometimes they pour forth their souls in heavenly conversations; but more frequently they silently confine in the depths of their hearts that felicity with which they are filled to overflowing. Oh! cries one, how I long to see the royal Infant, to kiss His sacred feet, and to express to Him all the love with which He inspires me! And his eyes fill with tears. Oh! cries another, if the mere desire and hope of seeing Him fill our hearts with such lively emotion, how will we be ravished with delight in His presence! How happy must be the mother of such a child! says a third. Whilst thus, by turns recollected or transported with joy, they gave themselves up to the charm of heavenly affections, suddenly the town of Bethlehem burst upon their sight. Uncertain, however, if the city which they perceive, be the one to which they are bound, they raise their eyes to the star, and their hearts toward the God who directs it. What happiness! the celestial guide stands still, and, shedding a more brilliant light than before, seems to say to them, Behold the birth-place of Him whom you seek.

Entering into the house, they found the child, with Mary his mother, and falling down, they adored him. It is in those simple words, dear child, that the Evangelist narrates the entrance of the Eastern kings into the abode of the King of kings. Was it to the stable and the manger that the Magi were led by means of the star? Had Joseph and Mary left the Infant there? had they sought to procure Him a more comfortable lodging, or had they been unable to do so? Let us content ourselves with the words of the Gospel, *The star stood over where the child was.* Doubtless in the place of His birth, or at least near it, since it was thither that the Magi had been directed; and we must believe it to have been in Bethlehem itself, in order that those pious worshippers might see the accomplishment of the prophecy which had foretold it to them.

Recall to your mind, dear child, the whole conduct of the Magi, from their setting out until their arrival in Bethlehem, and consider their admirable spirit of faith. How prompt and generous it had been! They left their country and their relations without hesitation or delay. *We have seen His star*, they say simply, *and we are come.* Remark its constant character. Nothing can stop nor discourage it; not even the withdrawal of the super-

natural means upon which the whole success of their enterprise seemed to depend. Admire its perseverance. It caused them to triumph over fears, pleasures, and regrets; and at the end of their journey it rose up in its full perfection. Far from being disconcerted at the sight of the poverty surrounding the Infant Jesus, it discovered and recognized in Him the God and Monarch of the Universe.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem.

THE CHILD.—Divine Saviour, when I consider the constancy with which the Magi corresponded to Your grace, I feel greatly discouraged with myself.

THE INFANT JESUS.—That feeling would be just, were constancy in well-doing merely man's own work; but as it is a gift of my MERCY, man should hope all, and ask all from it.

THE CHILD.—But, dearest Master, why should I not feel alarmed when at each moment directly opposite desires are struggling in my heart, when my good-will is so weak, and my evil inclinations so strong?

THE INFANT JESUS began: Dear child, I tell you that from me all strength comes. It is I

alone who give the desire to do well, and the constancy necessary to accomplish it. Furthermore, never forget, that if self-distrust is a grace, discouragement is a temptation.

THE CHILD.—What must I do, dear Master, in order to remain ever-faithful to you?

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, watch carefully over your own heart, to avoid levity and infidelity: as soon as you feel the first approach of discouragement, throw yourself into the bosom of my mercy; and, at the first instance of presumption, humble yourself by the consideration of your weakness and misery.

THE CHILD.—My Saviour, I shall always need Your light to direct me, as the star guided the Magi, if I would walk with wisdom through the trials of this world.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My dear child, it is not my light which is wanting to souls, but their attention in consulting it. Light comes from above, and their looks are directed toward earth, their attention is absorbed by its vanities. If the Magi had not lifted their eyes toward heaven, they would never have perceived the salutary sign which was to lead them to the feet of their Saviour.

PRACTICE.

Learn to serve God joyfully.

PRAYER.

Divine Saviour, deign to teach me more and more clearly the happiness of a soul freed from the slavery of the passions. Since you wish me to serve You with joy, give me that sweet serenity which is not dissipation, that habitual recollection which is not sorrow, in order that, removed from all excess, I may show to all, and cause all to desire to experience, the happiness of belonging to so good a Master. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

It is related of St. Anthony the Solitary, that he lost his parents before he was twenty years of age; and that by their death he found himself possessed of considerable wealth. Uncertain of the use he should make of his fortune and his liberty, he entered one day into the church as they were reading these words of the Gospel: "Go sell what thou hast and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." (St. Matthew, xix. 21.) Anthony considered these words as addressed to himself, and, returning home, distributed to his neighbors the wealth he had inherited. The rest of his estate and furniture he sold, and gave the price to the poor, and quitted the world to embrace a religious life.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XII. OF JANUARY.

The Magi offer their presents to the Infant Jesus.

Behold now the Magi arrived in that Bethlehem after which, during the happy moments as well as during the trials of their journey, they had so ardently sighed. Think, dear child, with what pious impressions they stepped over the threshold of the house which contained that Blessed Infant, whose birth Heaven had taken such care to proclaim; with what tender veneration they approached Him, and prostrated themselves before His cradle, by turns contemplating Him and imploring His mercy, thanking God and congratulating His Blessed Mother. Words fail before such a subject; no mortal hand can paint so divine a scene. Who could portray the joy of those supernaturally instructed men, so miraculously led to the abode of the Word made flesh, and to the sight of His Virgin Mother who presented Him to their adoration? Uninstructed Christians, or those who are weak in the faith, are, as it were, embarrassed for the Magi, at the state of poverty in which they find the Infant God. I love to think, dear child, that you have already

sufficiently penetrated their spirit, to understand that neither gold nor purple would have elevated His dignity in those eyes to whom the Celestial Light had revealed it in so striking a manner, and that, under those humble appearances, their faith discovered the magnificence of Him who had clothed the firmament with its splendor, and shed over the earth the riches of His goodness.

But it was not enough for their piety to exhaust itself in holy affections, in outbursts of admiration, respect, and love; it must further declare and show itself by its gifts. It was the custom of the East never to appear before their rulers without offering them presents, and it was doubtless in conformity with that habit that the Magi had brought with them precious gifts destined for the Infant God whom they came to adore. But the nature and choice of their offerings bear a particular character, as the holy Fathers have remarked, and in them they discover the symbol and expression, as it were, of the faith of the Magi. They gave Him, they tell us, gold as to a King; by the incense they honored His divinity; and by the myrrh, His humanity and burial, because that was the perfume used in embalming the dead. The Church has approved their interpretation, and finds in it important considerations for the sanctification

of her children; she teaches them that the gold which they should offer to Jesus Christ, is a pure love and ardent charity; that the Christian's incense is, those desires and prayers which the Holy Scripture calls the sacrifice of the lips; the myrrh is that spirit of penance by which they unite themselves to the passion and death of their Saviour, and bury in His sepulchre all the evil inclination of their corrupt nature. Dear child, since Jesus is your King, promise Him to remain ever-faithful to Him; since He is your victim, unite yourself to His sacrifice, and generously immolate to Him all that is displeasing to Him in your conduct; finally, since He is your God, give your entire love and your whole heart to Him without reserve.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the presents of the Magi.

The Child.—Divine Jesus! how I regret that I have not some rich treasure in my possession, that I might present it to You!

The Infant Jesus.—My child, gold and silver are mine, all the riches that men possess are the gift of my goodness. The only offering worthy of me is the gift of their hearts.

The Child.—Poor though my heart be, loving

Saviour, it has long belonged to You. But still it would rejoice, had it, like the Magi, rich gifts to lay at Your feet.

THE INFANT JESUS.—What rendered their offerings worthy of me, dear child, and gave them merit in my eyes, was the faith which prompted them, and their punctual docility to the movements of my grace.

THE CHILD.—O my Saviour! when You revealed Yourself so mercifully to these souls, how could they help recognizing You as their God?

THE INFANT JESUS.—Has the star which guided *them* now lost its brightness? Does it not shine with a still greater lustre in my Holy Gospel? Why do so many hearts refuse me their homage? Does not the light of my grace enlighten your soul? Why, then, do you so often refuse to make the smallest sacrifice?

THE CHILD.—O my Sovereign Master! I can only answer by my sighs.

THE INFANT JESUS.—By what exercise of penance do you associate yourself with my sorrows? And, carried away as you are by earthly vanities, dare you say that you are dead to the world, which you should be by reason of your baptism, and buried with your Saviour?

THE CHILD.—God of mercy! take pity on me.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Henceforth, at least, be more generous in your whole conduct. Give your desires, regrets, love, repentance, in a word, all that you are, without reserve to Him who only asks it of you in order to overwhelm you with His blessings. Accustom yourself early, dear child, to behold me in the persons of my poor. The smallest gifts which your charity bestows upon them will be deposited in my heart, and will insure you all its love.

PRACTICE.

Look upon Jesus Christ in the persons of the poor.

PRAYER.

Divine Jesus, fill my heart with that compassion with which Yours was filled for us; give me bowels of mercy quick to perceive suffering, and generosity to relieve it promptly. Remove from me the desire of riches; teach me to despise them. May Your love be my treasure, and the possession of Your grace my felicity. Be all my inheritance in the land of the living. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

St. Hedwiges, Duchess of Poland, loved the poor so much, that she washed their feet, kissed them, and then gave them alms. Frequently she

washed the feet and kissed the ulcers of the lepers, and exhausted her resources in relieving the necessitous. In a word, she loved them so tenderly, that she purchased from them the bread that had been given them in alms, and kissed it, as being something sacred. She had also, in honor of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, thirteen poor persons, whom she always maintained and brought with her wherever she travelled. She waited upon them herself at table, where they were served with good meat before she took her own coarse refection.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XIII. OF JANUARY.

Return of the Magi to their own land.

Herod, either instructed by the doctors of the law whom he had consulted, not believing in the Divine oracle, or feeling sure of being able to counteract its effect by his own skilfulness, had taken the Magi aside privately, and after carefully questioning them upon the time of the star which had appeared to them, affecting an air of goodness and confidence, said to them, "Go into Bethlehem, and diligently inquire after the Child, and when

you have found Him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore Him." In his cruelty he sought to plunge a poignard into His bosom, and feigned a desire to adore Him in order to cover his crime. But God breaks up the designs of the wicked, and overthrows them. It would have been easy for Herod to spy out the course of the Wise Men, to send upon their steps some one of those perverse and wicked men who were ever ready to obey his most barbarous orders. But no, trusting to his dissimulation, he awaited their return—he lost in conjectures the time necessary for the execution of his crime, and when he sought to carry it out, the Infant Jesus was in security. The Gospel tells us that, the Magi, having been warned in sleep not to return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country.

Think, dear child, upon the consolation they must have experienced from such numerous evidences of the constant and watchful protection of Providence. How contentedly they returned homeward, happy in having seen that King of the Jews whom they had come from afar to seek, who had been pointed out to them both by the Star and by the Prophets, in having found Him, whether in the stable or in some equally humble abode,

without pomp and without display; but, above all, happy in the use they had made of their riches by offering them to Him. That was the recompense of their faith, rectitude, and simplicity. Thus they triumphed over the crooked policy of Herod. But, dear child, their return into their own country, *by another way*, encloses an instruction which is not to be neglected, and which you must immediately apply to yourself.

After infidelities more or less culpable, after a state of neglect and indifference more or less prolonged, you have been brought to the Infant Jesus; you have found Him, dear child; you have offered Him your gifts, your desires, your regrets, all your affections, and your whole being. Examine carefully by what path you wish to walk hereafter: remember that you can no longer follow that broad road which leads to perdition; you can no longer serve God with inconstancy, nor love nor abandon Him through caprice. You also have received your warning. If you return toward Herod, toward that friend whose advice has been so fatal to your innocence, to that company whose malice has set snares for your simplicity and piety, you will be led astray. You can no longer repeat what you have so often heard, of those books and amusements forbidden by religion: that you see

no harm in them, that you have nothing to fear from them, that your motives in using them are pure, and your heart innocent. Your intentions cannot be purer than were those of the Magi; and yet, had they not been docile to the warnings of Heaven, had they returned to Herod, victims of his perfidy, they would have lost the fruit of their journey, and perilled the life of the Infant Jesus. Renewed by His grace, walk faithfully, dear child, *in the new road*, that is to say, by the paths of prudence, constancy and fidelity.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the return of the Magi into their own country.

The Child.—It appears to me, Divine Jesus, that had I, like the Magi, been led to Your cradle, nothing could ever have torn me away from it. I should have taken up my abode there.

The Infant Jesus.—My child, the effect of my presence in the soul, and the first-fruit of my grace, is a blind obedience to God's will in whatever way it is manifested.

The Child.—But, dearest Lord, what could they have desired to see, after having seen You? What conversations could have the least attractions for those who had conversed with the Queen of Angels?

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, this earth is not a place of contentment and the clear sun of the Divinity for my disciples, but one of faith and trial; before they can enjoy the blessings which I have in store for them, they must labor to merit them.

THE CHILD.—O my Divine Master! the Magi, receiving, as they did, such glorious light from their loving contemplatiou of Your Adorable Person, must have been anxious to spread it abroad amongst their own people; but what can a feeble child like me do for Your glory?

THE INFANT JESUS.—When there is question of laboring for my glory, the most enlightened man is worth no more than a child; but I make eloquent the tongues of infants, at pleasure; besides, dear child, it is much more by actions than by words, that you can prove to me your gratitude, and render me glory.

PRACTICE.

Remember constantly that we are pilgrims on this earth.

PRAYER.

Divine Lord, since You have taught me that this earth is but a land of exile, do not suffer my

soul to become attached to it, nor to forget her blessed country. How could I ever cling to any other abode than the one which You inhabit? It is You, You alone, whom I wish to see, O Infinite Beauty! You, whom I wish to possess, O goodness, riches, source and principle of every blessing. Nourish in me this holy desire, O good Jesus, in order that it may insure me the possession of You hereafter. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

The Monk Frodoard, speaking of St. Remigius, in his history of the Church of Rheims, says: "That his sanctity moved not only rational creatures, but even tamed those that are without reason, and that one day when he was giving a familiar repast to some intimate friends, and rejoicing to see them happy, some sparrows came down and began to eat some crumbs out of his hand;" he relates also that St. Basle, who lived as an anchorite in the mountain near Rheims, having saved a poor beast that had fled from the forest pursued by a hunter, whose dogs seemed to forget all their ferocity in approaching his little cell, it used to be remarked by all hunters that ever afterward any beast who could gain the heights in that forest was safe, for that then the dogs would lose their ardor

and the hunters their courage. The same affection for animals is expressly ascribed to St. Anselm, St. Francis, and many other great servants of God.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XIV. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus flees into Egypt.

"AFTER the Magi were departed, behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him." How many lessons are contained in those few Gospel words! What abundant matter for reflection in the mystery of the flight of the Infant Jesus! Accustom yourself, dear child, to contemplate and weigh with religious attention all those details regarding the life of the Redeemer of the World, which the Evangelists have collected and which interest our faith so strongly. It is only because men have so vague an idea, and so superficial a knowledge of them that the greater part are not more touched by them. For that end, dear child, re-

member three most important facts: Firstly, That it was not the same with Jesus Christ as with other children, whose knowledge increases but slowly, in proportion as they grow in years; but was perfect in Him from the first moment of His Incarnation. Secondly, That although exteriorly He differed in nowise from an ordinary infant, and that He appeared inactive, He it was, however, who operated and directed all the mysteries of His Infancy, since it was He who enlightened and guided Mary and Joseph. Thirdly, That although He only expressed His sufferings by moans and tears, the feeling of sorrow equalling in Him the knowledge thereof, in all the multiplied trials of the Holy Family it was always He who bore their weight and exhausted their bitterness. Thus, dear child, Jesus did not enjoy that privilege of the earliest age, namely, that of being exempt from the disquietudes and troubles of this life. Never forget that fact, and in the midst of the joyous images which His first mysteries offer to your mind, always recognize in Him the innocent victim of your sins and the dearest object of your love.

Such considerations will powerfully assist you in discovering all the rigors contained in that order transmitted from Heaven to the chief of the Holy Family: "Arise," said the Angel to Joseph.

What! in the middle of the night? Might he not wait until morning? No, no: "Take the Infant and His Mother and fly into Egypt." It was not an ordinary departure; it embraced all that can be imagined most painful and humiliating; a hurried flight, through the darkness, without taking time to provide for their most pressing necessities. And how long was their exile to last? The heavenly messenger does not know: *Remain there until I shall tell thee.* Perhaps, dear child, you have already secretly addressed to me a question which naturally presents itself to the mind. Were there no other means than flight, to preserve the life of the Holy Child? That question is not hard to answer, or rather, it is not permitted us to doubt that Divine Providence had a thousand ways at His disposition. But God does not do every thing by miracle; it is His custom to follow the ordinary course of events in things which depend on Him, as well as extraordinary ones. Furthermore, dear child, the Son of God did not come to astonish us by prodigies of power, but to instruct us by prodigies of humiliation. What could be better calculated to enlighten us than the spectacle of that flight. The Almighty reduced to fleeing from His creature, the Author of Life, the Saviour of all men, seeking no other means of safety from

the homicidal hatred which pursues Him. That mystery offers us, if possible, a still more touching lesson. This earth, to which men so fondly cling, is, after all, a land of exile. Banished from heaven, we could never have regained the road thitherward, if Jesus had not associated Himself to our fault, if He had not made Himself an exile like us. It was to console, to teach, and to direct us in our exile that He Himself fled from before His people. Unite yourself in your turn to His merciful flight, whatever sacrifice He may require of you; there is no security for you but near Him, nor is there any salvation for you, but in flight from the world.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the flight into Egypt.

THE CHILD.—Can it be possible, dear Saviour! that, scarcely born, hatred already pursues You, and threatens You with death. And You can only escape the danger by flight.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, on entering into the world, I offered myself as a victim. It was not to shrink from the sacrifice that I took refuge in flight, but in order to obey the commands of my Father and to instruct men.

THE CHILD.—O my Saviour! even whilst I

lament the humiliation and hardship of your flight, I cannot help rejoicing at it since it preserved you from the fury of Herod's cruelty.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Oh! at least by that humiliation I repaired the outrage man had committed against the Divine Majesty, and by means of my flight I brought him back into his own country. But I have still to submit daily to the same humiliation which is consummated by the loss of souls.

THE CHILD.—My Saviour, since You have risen from the dead and ascended to Your glorious abode, humiliation and suffering can no longer reach You.

THE INFANT JESUS.—That is true, my child, yet Christians, as much as in them lies, condemn me to humiliation in their hearts, by forcing me to banish myself from them, and, by sacrificing me to their criminal passions, they pursue me unto death with more cruel barbarity than that of Herod.

THE CHILD.—O my Divine Master! what a ray of light! I was always incensed at Herod's crime, and yet I never thought that I had been a thousand times guilty of a similar one. How often have I forced You to depart from my soul! how many times have I driven You from the throne of my heart to place upon it in Your stead, pride, sensuality, falsehood, and all other tyrants who were to render me so unhappy! O Jesus, my King! in

mercy take possession of my soul forever: reign in the midst of Your enemies.

PRACTICE.

Take a firm resolution to avoid the occasions of sin.

PRAYER.

O my Divine Saviour! perhaps I have had the misfortune to slay You in my heart through sin; but I am only too sure of having frequently forced You to depart from it. O Jesus! to have exposed You to such a humiliation! to have driven away my friend, my Father, my Saviour! O Divine Infant! that thought overwhelms me, and covers me with confusion. Pardon me, or rather ratify the pardon, which I hope You have already granted me, and remain with me until my latest breath. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

The venerable Sister Jane of Jesus and Mary, a Franciscan nun, whilst she was one day meditating on the Infant Jesus being persecuted by Herod, heard a great noise as of armed men pursuing some one, and then saw before her a beautiful boy looking much distressed, who seemed to be running

away, and who said to her: "Oh, Jane, help me, and save me! I am Jesus of Nazareth; I am flying from sinners who want to take my life away and persecute me worse than Herod; do you save me."

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XV. OF JANUARY.

The Holy Innocents.

I NOW present to you, dear child, a most consoling subject for meditation. When we begin truly to love Jesus Christ, we experience the desire to glorify Him, and lament if we do not possess the means so to do; we wish to teach all hearts to know and praise Him, and we see no other means to accomplish it but by our prayers and loving desires. The Gospel this day presents to your consideration little children who have rendered Him similar testimony, not by their words, but by their deaths, and who, purified by the baptism of blood and by their Saviour's grace, winged their flight into heaven, ere they had been spoiled by the corruption of earth.

Herod seeing that he had been deceived by the Magi, was greatly enraged, and also overwhelmed

with fear. In order to compass the destruction of Him whom he dreaded, that is to say, of the Messiah, *The Desired of all Nations*, in a more certain manner, he conceived the horrible project of massacring all the children of two years old and under who should be found in Bethlehem and all the borders thereof. See, my child, to what crimes passion leads men, of what excess it renders them capable. The soldiers charged with the execution of Herod's order, repaired to Bethlehem and the surrounding country, and murdered all the children within the proscribed ages. The cries of the children and their bereaved mothers were so piercing that the Evangelist applies to that event the prophecy of Jeremiah, contained in these words: "A voice was heard in Rama, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." That prophecy, which relates to the captivity of Babylon, had its perfect accomplishment in the massacre of the Holy Innocents. The Rama mentioned by St. Matthew, was a village not far from Bethlehem, and Rachel's tomb was in a field belonging to it. Besides, it is more than probable that the massacre extended even to the tribe of Benjamin, which was in the neighborhood and was descended from Rachel.

Can you understand, my dear child, all the happiness of those children who had the glory of confessing Jesus Christ at an age wherein they could not even invoke His name. They were His first Martyrs, they only received life in order to offer it as a sacrifice, and they not only suffered death for Jesus Christ, but they died in His place. Alas! had they lived longer, many among them, perhaps, might have been perverted by the world. Congratulate, then, dearest child, those happy beings who were immolated to preserve the life of the Saviour of mankind. Had their mothers understood the mystery, they would have uttered shouts of praise and benediction instead of weeping and mourning. "Let us to whom it is revealed, accompany with songs of delight that blessed troop, even into Abraham's bosom. Let us bless, glorify, and congratulate them, now seated in heaven. Let us salute, in union with the whole Church, those her cherished ones, and listen to the innocent voice of those first blessed martyrs, whilst we see them crowned with glory and holding their palms of victory; let us join ourselves to that innocent troop by our simplicity and purity of life; and let us be true children in all wickedness, in order to honor the Holy Childhood of Jesus Christ."

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the massacre of the Holy Innocents.

THE CHILD.—Divine Saviour, how great was Your mercy toward those little children! You granted them the crown of victory ere they had undergone the pain of the struggle.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Man's happiness is always the fruit of my grace. I have frequently taken away all sense of pain from my martyrs; those children had no knowledge of it; in the latter, as in the former case, I rewarded the merit of suffering and death.

THE CHILD.—It seems to me, O my Saviour, that I should be most happy to have been immolated for You, especially when there was only question of a momentary sacrifice.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Once again, dear child, even the smallest privation endured through love of me can only be an effect of my grace, and the sacrifice of one's life is the greatest of all sacrifices.

THE CHILD.—And yet, O my dear Master, upon many occasions I would rather die than conquer myself, or submit cheerfully to my trials.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Sad effect of passion! terrible result of that blindness and pride which

sooner or later pave the way for the commission of that most unpardonable of crimes, and which daily precipitate souls into damnation.

THE CHILD.—Far from me, dear Lord! that wicked contempt of life which leads men to brave death, because they believe in no life beyond the grave. Deign mercifully to preserve me from such a misfortune!

THE INFANT JESUS.—In order to strengthen that pious disposition within you, remember frequently, dear child, that every Christian has his own proper martyrdom to undergo, and that he must glorify me either within himself, by those combats and victories of which I am the sole witness, or without, by the profession of faith and the constant practice of all Christian virtues.

PRACTICE.

Frequently offer to God the sacrifice of your life.

PRAYER.

Divine Jesus! how sorry I am, that the weakness of my age will not permit me either to celebrate Your glory, to spread abroad the knowledge of Your goodness, or to cause You to be loved! In Your mercy You graciously crowned the death

of the Holy Innocents; deign to receive the offering which I now make You of my life, and render it so pure, that it may be a sweet-smelling sacrifice in Your sight, and an image and memorial to men of the virtues of Your holy childhood. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

In the city of Sebaste, in Armenia, forty soldiers were arrested under the persecution of Licinius, and brought before the governor to be interrogated upon their refusing to obey the orders of the emperor. The governor devised an extraordinary kind of death, which he hoped would shake their constancy. It was winter, and the north wind blew violently. He ordered the martyrs to be exposed naked for one night in a frozen pond, which stood in the middle of the city; and to tempt them more strongly by the facility of a remedy, he had a warm bath prepared in an adjoining hall. The martyrs cheerfully undressed, mutually encouraging each other, and repeating this prayer, "Lord Jesus, we are forty, who are engaged in this combat: grant that we may be forty crowned, and that not one be wanting to this sacred number." Only one had the misfortune to be overcome, and went off from the pond to seek relief in the warm bath.

But no sooner had he entered it, than he expired. A sentinel was warming himself near the bath, and witnessed this amazing spectacle: he saw angels distributing crowns to those generous martyrs, one only excepted, who was their faint-hearted companion already mentioned. The guard being struck at this vision, threw off his clothes, and placed himself in his stead amongst the thirty-nine martyrs, and thus consoled them for his desertion.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XVI. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus in Egypt.

In the meditation before the last, dear child, you heard of the order given to the venerable chief of the Holy Family, to fly with them into Egypt; and your love for the Infant Jesus caused you to feel sensibly, all the hardship of that new and unexpected trial. To-day we will meditate upon its execution, which you will not find less instructive than the order itself. Joseph, continues the Evangelist, arose that same night, took the child and his mother, and retired into Egypt.

If you are curious to know why Egypt was selected by Heaven as the place of refuge for the Infant God, it will be easy to discover the reason; you have only to recall to mind that important truth of faith, which gives, as it were, the key to all the striking events of Sacred History, namely, that all that happened to the people of God, was but a figure of what was one day to take place in the Church, and that Jesus Christ was announced and represented in the memorable events, and by all the principal personages of the old law.

Thus Egypt was to be for a time a land of refuge for the children of Israel: it was also to be a place of security for Jesus Christ. Thus Moses, to constrain that infidel land to recognize the true God, had afflicted it by various plagues and covered it with darkness; Jesus Christ came to cure its wounds and restore light to its borders; Moses appeared as Pharaoh's God, and the enchantments of the devil's ministers could not prevail over his power; at the entrance of Jesus Christ into Egypt the idols were overthrown and fell to pieces. Finally, Moses, speaking in the name of the Most High, and performing the most astonishing miracles, had prepared Egypt to recognize and adore Him at some future period; Jesus Christ, by His presence alone, enlightened it, sanctified it, and pre-

pared it to give birth to those generations of Saints, whose supereminent virtues were and still are the admiration of all succeeding ages.

After those striking and true comparisons, so well calculated to give you an idea of God's manner of bringing about His will in various events, think, dear child, upon the multiplied trials which that abode, or rather that long exile, must have imposed upon the Infant Jesus. If when *he came unto his own, his own received him not*, what reception would He be likely to meet with in a strange land and among barbarous people? Oh! my child, He found that which He went thither to seek, namely, obscurity, contempt, and forgetfulness of men. But it was there He gave us all those touching examples of resignation, patience, and unbounded confidence in, and resignation to, God's holy will. Never forget that, different from all other children, He possessed the full knowledge and sense of all that he endured, and that in a degree to which the most exquisite susceptibility can never approach. Thus, he felt deeply all the humiliation of his banishment and flight—all that there was of bitterness in removing far from the place of His birth, and separating from His friends and neighbors. Also all the privations to which their narrow circumstances, and even indigence, exposed the Holy

Family, he felt most sensibly, more on account of Mary and Joseph, than on his own. Picture to yourself the excess of his sorrow, in seeing those amongst whom He lived worshipping idols, and offering to them their abominable sacrifices. But amid so many subjects of affliction, does He complain of, or lament the duration of His trials? or hasten their termination by impatient wishes or by deep sadness of mind? No, dear child, He awaits in peaceful submission to His Father's orders, the hour marked out in His eternal decrees, He offers Himself in expiation for all the sins of which He is a witness; He implores light for all those blinded souls who do not even desire it; He fertilizes that idolatrous land, by watering it with his tears, and in Egypt as at Bethlehem, at Nazareth, and on Calvary, *God is ever within Him reconciling the world unto Himself.*

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon His sojourn in Egypt.

THE CHILD.—My Divine Saviour! I did not suspect all the privations and suffering of all kinds which assailed You during Your exile.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Thus the greater number of Christians do not understand the mysteries of my life, and for that reason do not know how to

appreciate all that I have suffered for their salvation.

THE CHILD.—Ah! my Divine Master, send down Your grace upon me, and enlighten me, for what I have just read astonishes and affects me; I am still far from penetrating into the spirit of Your mysteries.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, you should aspire less to the heights of contemplation, than to endeavoring to imitate my example.

THE CHILD.—But, dear Lord, how can I imitate You during Your abode in Egypt?

THE INFANT JESUS.—Look upon this earth, dear child, as a land of exile, and do not set your heart upon it. That spirit of detachment which appears so difficult to you is, however, the first among all virtues, and the most indispensable one for your age.

THE CHILD.—Dear Lord! permit me to say to You, that my situation is very different from that one which fell to Your share whilst in Egypt. You were far from Your own country, and I am at home. You were living among strangers, whilst I am surrounded by my own relations.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Oh, child of Adam! you do not understand that, banished as you are from heaven, whatever place you may inhabit, you are

always in a land of exile, and in danger of never seeing again your true country, or the saints and angels, your co-heirs, your brethren, and immortal fellow-citizens.

THE CHILD.—O Divine Jesus! it is very difficult not to become attached to any thing.

THE INFANT JESUS.—It will be much harder to *detach* yourself from all things; still that must be done, however strong the ties which bind your heart to perishable objects. I do not ask impossibilities from man; but whilst permitting him to enjoy his lawful attachments, I wish him to keep his heart free from all that might stifle his desires after, and stop him in his flight toward heaven.

PRACTICE.

Renew often in your soul the holy desire of heaven.

PRAYER.

You created me purely through love, O Infinite Goodness! and the happiness which You have destined for me is naught else than the vision of Your own beatitude. It was to restore to me that blessing, of which sin had deprived me, that You came down from heaven, O my Divine Redeemer! and suffered the most cruel and ignominious of deaths. Do not suffer Your mercy to become useless to me,

but enkindle in my heart an ardent desire to be inseparably united to You, both in time and throughout eternity. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

Pelbart relates, that a certain soldier was full of vices; but had a devout wife, who, not being able to reform him, recommended him at least not to omit saying, every day, a Hail Mary before some image of Our Lady. One day, as he was about to commit sin, he passed by a church, which by chance he entered; and seeing an image of our Blessed Lady, he knelt down, and said a Hail Mary; and what did he then see? he saw the Infant Jesus in the arms of Mary, all covered with bleeding wounds. Upon which he said, "O God, what barbarian has thus ill-treated this innocent Babe?" "It is you, sinner," answered Mary; "it is you who thus ill-use my son." Then, full of contrition, he begged her to obtain his pardon, calling her Mother of Mercy. She replied, "You sinners call me Mother of Mercy, but you do not cease to make me a Mother of Sorrows and of Misery." But the penitent did not lose courage, and continued to pray to Mary to intercede for him. The Blessed Virgin turned to her Son and asked Him to pardon this sinner. He seemed re-

luctant to do so; but then Mary said to Him, "O my Son, I will not leave Thy feet if Thou dost not forgive this afflicted man who has recommended himself to me." Then Jesus said to her: "O my Mother, I never have refused you any thing; do you desire the pardon of this sinner? let him be pardoned; and in token of the pardon which I grant him, I desire that he should come and kiss my wounds." The sinner then went up to the image, drew near, and whilst he was kissing them, the wounds were closed. Immediately, on leaving the church, he asked pardon of his wife, and with mutual consent they both left the world, and became religiouses in two monasteries, where they ended their lives by a holy death.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XVII. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus leaves Egypt.

We must all acknowledge, dear child, that our impatience in all the disagreeable occurrences which fall to our lot is very unreasonable; especially since they are all conformable to the designs of God's providence in our behalf. All finite

things last so short a time! The evil will of men, to whom besides, God only allows the power to act according to the views of His wisdom, and for the accomplishment of His adorable intentions, ceases at its allotted term, and that term is always so near at hand. Herod laid all his plans very skilfully; but fell himself into his own snares: he exhausted all the resources of his bitter cruelty, but still had no better success. If we may credit a pagan author, amongst those children of two years old and under, whom his bloody ambition caused to be slain, was one of his own sons; and He whom he pursued was apparently the only one who was saved. He himself did not long survive those victims whom he had murdered to secure his crown and life, but soon went to give an account before the Supreme Judge, who is called in Scripture, *The Father of the fatherless*, of the innocent blood he had caused to be shed.

"Immediately after Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the Child and his Mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the Child." Weigh well, dear child, all the circumstances connected with that celestial warning. It is always the will of the Father that determines the conduct of the

Son, for the return as for the setting out. It is again an angel who bears the order, which is expressed in about the same terms; it is also to the chief of the Holy Family that he addresses himself, who executes his commands with the same docility and promptness. What lessons you have, perhaps, already learned from these comparisons, dear child! You can easily apply them to your own conduct, and draw therefrom these conclusions, that it is God's will which rules and disposes of all events; that when you are careful to consult it, it does not fail to manifest itself by miracles if needs be, in the midst of Egypt as in the land of Israel; that submission to all it requires under painful circumstances, will draw down its light upon other occasions; that simplicity and prompt obedience insure us profound peace in difficult trials, as well as in the most consoling and happy events; and finally, that man's whole happiness upon earth consists in knowing and doing the will of God.

Jesus therefore leaves Egypt, as He entered it, by the order of His Father, and in the same spirit which had led Him thither. *Remain there until I shall tell thee:* such had been the command. With what punctuality it had been observed. Remark again, dear child, that as the flight and

sojourn in Egypt had been prefigured by Jacob and his family, the departure of the Saviour from that strange land had been represented by that of the Israelites under the guidance of Moses, and, moreover, formally predicted by these words of the Prophet Osee: *I called my Son out of Egypt.* Had there been no prophecies relative to the humiliations of our Divine Saviour, they should not have been a subject of scandal for us; but when they had been announced so many centuries previously, in so many ways, how can they fail to strengthen our faith and hope?

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon His departure from Egypt.

THE CHILD.—Divine Saviour! what consolation for me to see You leave Egypt, having overthrown all her false gods, and escaped all dangers!

THE INFANT JESUS.—Above all, dear child, rejoice in that my departure from Egypt is the pledge of your deliverance, if, like the children of Israel, the land of your captivity has not caused you to forget the land of promise.

THE CHILD.—Why, dear Lord, should I imitate those careless people who, overwhelmed by hard labor, had lost the sense of their own dignity?

THE INFANT JESUS.—And yet, my poor child,

do the greater part of men behave differently? This earth has taught them to forget heaven, and, under the weight of so many miseries, they do not even desire to reach that abode of repose and peace.

THE CHILD.—O my God! I cannot understand such strange blindness.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Yet you, dear child, are equally blind. You have formed a false idea of the world and its pleasures, and little as you may enjoy their deceitful sweetness, you will soon forget both your soul and heaven.

THE CHILD.—Dear Saviour! have mercy on me; guide my steps, and whilst I am waiting for You to take me forth out of this land of Egypt, implant and maintain in my heart the desire and hope of the land of all true blessings.

PRACTICE.

Often reflect, with gratitude, upon the grace of your baptism.

PRAYER.

O my Saviour! since You commanded the children of Israel always to remember that they had been drawn forth out of the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage, what will You require from the children of faith whom You have deliv-

ered from hell, and the slavery of the devil? It is just, dear Lord, that I render You everlasting thanksgivings for so great a benefit; and that it be ever-present to my memory! Do not suffer the remembrance of it to remain barren in my soul, but grant that, influencing all my conduct, it may render me worthy of the glorious Head to whom I belong, and of the happiness which He has acquired for me at the price of His Blood. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

St. Louis, king of France, preferred going to Poissy than to any other part of his kingdom, because it was there he had been baptized; and he was accustomed to say, that he received there more dignity and honor than in any other part of the world; for this reason he always signed himself Louis of Poissy. Following his example, all the kings of France have shown the greatest esteem for the name of Christian, in placing as their first and principal title of honor, that of "Most Christian," given to Charlemagne; as that of Catholic, to the kings of Spain.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XVIII. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus returns to Judea.

You have seen, dear child, with what prompt obedience St. Joseph, taking with him the Child and His Mother, as directed, set out for Judea. "But when he came into the land of Israel, hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned in sleep. retired into the quarters of Galilee. And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophet: That He shall be called a Nazarite." Here you will recognize, dear child, the same guiding hand of Providence, sending with each trial the necessary light and grace to overcome it. Then, observe, how naturally all the prophecies relative to the Messiah are accomplished. It had been predicted that He should be called the Nazarene, that is to say, holy or consecrated to the Lord. The histories of Samuel and Samson have taught you how children, under the old law, were consecrated to God, sometimes even while yet unborn. It was not after the same manner, nor by external ceremonies, that the Infant

Jesus was raised to God as a Nazarite, although we cannot doubt that the Blessed Virgin offered Him to the celestial Father from the first moment of His conception within her chaste womb, and a thousand times afterward. It was He, as His apostle reveals to us, who from His first entrance into the world, presented Himself to His Father, to replace all oblations and sacrifice. "That word Nazarene, therefore, contained a great mystery, since it expressed the Holiness of the Saviour." He was generally styled Jesus Nazarenus, as appears from the inscription on the cross. St. Peter, in his sermon to Cornelius the centurion, calls Him Jesus of Nazareth, to show us that it was in harmony with the designs of God, that the name of Nazarene, which had been given to many who were types of Jesus Christ, should be applied to Him in token of holiness; and it was one of those prophecies which God made known by His Holy Ghost to the evangelists, in order to distinguish Jesus Christ as the Holy of Holies.

That name of Nazarene was justly required, since, by nature, separated from sinners, He was to be the model as He was the source of all holiness, since it was in that humble house at Nazareth, that, unknown to men but the object of continual admiration to the Angels, He was about to

open that career of virtue, in which His dearest disciples strive to follow Him, to lead that life of humility, labor and poverty, under which for the space of thirty years He was to hide His wisdom, power and majesty.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon His Name of Nazarene.

THE CHILD.—Divine Saviour! it must have been a great blessing for the children under the old Law to have been consecrated to God from their birth, since that consecration was followed by such happy results.

THE INFANT JESUS.—However, my child, it was only a figure of that of the children of the church by their baptism.

THE CHILD.—But, my Saviour, we do not see You reproduce in baptized children prodigies similar to those which astonish us in Samson and Samuel.

THE INFANT JESUS.—In the first place, dear child, all the Nazarites were not favored with such extraordinary gifts as these two judges in Israel; and then, too, the graces given to Christians in the sacrament of regeneration, far surpass even the most precious benedictions of the ancient alliance.

THE CHILD.—But, Divine Master, how does it produce so great fruit in such young children?

THE INFANT JESUS.—Child of God! look over your past life, and go back to the first moments in which your soul was capable of knowledge, and you will find the answer to your question; what means have I ever neglected to induce you to love me? Good thoughts, holy desires, pure joys, tender reproaches, have I not tried them all to gain your heart? Why, then, has it become unfaithful? You know it has; but I am willing to forget it, if you labor sincerely to return to me.

PRACTICE.

Often recall to mind your baptismal engagements.

PRAYER.

O my Saviour! I have criminally neglected my baptismal engagements, and the holiness and spirit of detachment from the ideas, tastes and worldly pleasures which they imposed upon me! Perhaps I have often thought that I was not obliged to become a Saint; and have frequently said, either secretly or aloud, when some virtuous practice was proposed to me, that such was good for Saints only. Pardon me, my God! pardon an error so dangerous to my salvation, so injurious

to your Majesty. I realize, and I rejoice at the thought that I belong to You alone and should, and henceforth will, live only for You. Lord, since I am Yours, save me. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

Father Patrignani relates, that, after having committed a great many sins, a certain nun arrived at such an excess of crime, that, having one day communicated, she drew from her mouth the sacred particle, placed it in a handkerchief, and afterward having shut herself up in a cell, she threw the Blessed Sacrament on the ground, and began to trample it under her feet. But, lo! she casts her eyes down, and what does she see? She sees the Sacred Host changed into the form of a beautiful Infant, but all bruised and covered with blood, who said to her: "And what have I done to thee, that thou treatest me so ill?" Upon which the wretched creature, full of contrition and repentance, threw herself on her knees, bathed in tears, and said to Him, O my God, dost Thou ask me what Thou hast done to me? Thou hast loved me too much! The vision disappeared, and the nun changed her whole life and became a model of penance.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XIX. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus grows and strengthens.

If, as I hope, dear child, you begin to love Jesus Christ, it must be a sweet employment for you to follow Him, so to speak, step by step through all His mysteries, to question Him upon all His actions and movements, and to draw from them such profound instructions. What consolation a mother enjoys in watching the first look or smile of her child; what joy she experiences in seeing him take his first step, utter a badly articulated word, or give the least sign of the progress and development of his strength. And why should not our hearts feel something of that delightful satisfaction, since the Divine Word lowered Himself so far as to pass through all the steps of the earliest years, only in order to invite men to approach Him, and to conceive, whilst contemplating Him, those tender and affectionate sentiments, which the sight of a little child always inspires. And if you never lose sight of the fact that God, hidden under the guise of an Infant, is really your brother, can you, I do not say tire of, but ever satiate yourself with studying and seeking after

the simplest details of His adorable childhood? Can your heart ever defend itself against a pious sensibility at those simple but touching words of the Sacred Historian: "And the child grew, and advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and man."

Those who have only a superficial knowledge of the fact, and those who have not clearly penetrated its principle, fall into two directly opposite, but equally grave errors, with regard to the first years of the Infant God. The former, not comprehending that in consequence of the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Jesus Christ, the gift of knowledge was as entire and perfect in His soul, from the first moment of His Incarnation, as it was upon Thabor, and as it ever will be in Heaven, are astonished at the very wisdom we admire in His first mysteries; the latter, not clearly understanding that wisdom and light which were in Him from the beginning, wish every thing in him to be miraculous, and expect Him, while yet a child, to act exteriorly, and speak as a full-grown man. But, as one of the fathers judiciously remarks, if God did all by miracle, He would efface all that He has done by mercy. Thus it was necessary that, like all other children, Jesus should feel the progress of years, and that the wis-

dom with which he was filled should show itself by degrees.

Comprehend well, then, dear child, that when the Evangelist remarks that the child grew and increased in wisdom, and adds that the grace of God was with Him, he wishes us to understand that, in proportion as the child grew and began to act for Himself, wisdom and grace manifested themselves in a more sensible manner. Hence that adorable Saviour successively displayed to the eyes of men all that so perfect an infancy could offer that was admirable; and that He suffered some signs of that eternal wisdom with which He was filled to shine forth by degrees. In ordinary children it is by means of the care and teaching of their parents and masters that their minds and bodies grow, strengthen, and become fully developed; in the Infant Jesus, the gift of wisdom which He had received, even whilst in His mother's womb, manifested itself progressively, and His body, that masterpiece of the Holy Ghost, gradually attained all its perfection.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the development and progress of His early years.

The Child.—My Divine Saviour! at all times, and under every circumstance, You seek to be our model.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My design in taking human nature upon me was to serve man as much by my examples as by my merits.

THE CHILD.—Divine Jesus! in considering Your glorious examples, I feel quite discouraged to find within myself such a complete spirit of opposition to them. You, who were already perfection itself, manifested it only by degrees, whilst I, who am full of misery and weakness, find these bad qualities daily increasing.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Yes, my child, weakness is the inheritance of human nature, but strength is the fruit of my grace, and its triumph is made perfect in weakness.

THE CHILD.—Dear Master! I occasionally feel some ray of that grace divine; but, alas! that happy impression is quickly effaced.

THE INFANT JESUS.—I have no doubt, dear child, that you distrust yourself; but I wish you, above all, to have confidence in the power of my grace.

THE CHILD.—When you cast a kind look upon me, dear Lord, I am filled with zeal—nothing hinders me in Your service; but next moment finds me entirely indifferent, and the least obstacle is sufficient to keep me back.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My dear child, all my saints and followers have passed through the same

trials, but they never lost courage; and when they happened to falter, or even to fall astray, they rose quickly, and set forward with renewed vigor. By such means they reached the reward of their labors.

THE CHILD.—Dear Lord! dare I avow it? Sometimes, even in the very day in which I am faithful to Your service, sorrow and weariness overpower me; and something seems to tell me that I can never find the same happiness in serving You which I might enjoy in worldly amusements.

THE INFANT JESUS.—That, dear child, is a temptation easily recognized. The feeling that rendered you happy in Your fidelity was not a deception. It is the disposition of Your heart, not my grace which has changed. The tree which is one day to produce abundant fruit is exposed by turns to the burning sun or to sudden frosts, to drought or to rain, and often to the most violent storms. So it is with virtue: she grows and strengthens in the midst of trials of every kind.

PRACTICE.

Endeavor daily to increase in virtue.

PRAYER.

What am I doing upon earth, O my God! if,

while advancing in age, I do not increase in wisdom? Why does Your goodness prolong my life, if not in order to give me time to do penance, and so merit heaven? How have I employed the years which have elapsed since I attained the use of reason? Have mercy on me, dear Saviour, and deliver me from the weakness and darkness of infancy, that I may finally commence to know and love You. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

It is related of St. Felix of Valois, of that royal house of France, that while a child, he gave proofs of great piety and charity; he used to select the choicest dishes which were placed on the table, and send them to the poor; and the Church in her office does not disdain to add, that he was accustomed to recreate poor little boys with nice food. This was he of whom we read, that when grown up to youth, he more than once gave the clothes off his person to cover the naked; and who afterward, in order to avoid succeeding to the crown of France, to which he had a title, became a priest.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XX. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus follows his parents to Jerusalem.

You have surely noticed, dear children, that Jesus Christ, on coming into the world, did not seek a wealthy house to be born in, nor choose for His parents, persons celebrated, either for their knowledge or possessions, but recommendable for their piety. He wished to teach us not to be proud of the high position of our family, nor to lament over its obscurity, but to congratulate ourselves at finding therein good examples and edification, and to have learned from its members the holy habits of serving God and living in His fear and love. Joseph and Mary, never failed to comply with the legal custom of going up yearly to the Temple at Jerusalem, to celebrate the passover. The Evangelist tells us that *when Jesus was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast,* and took him with them. It was probably not the first time that He had accompanied them thither; but it was the epoch at which He was to manifest Himself, to enter upon His Evangelical

career, and as He said Himself, *to be about His Father's service*, that is, to spread the knowledge of Him among men, and to fill all hearts with His love. Dear child, you have reached the same age with the Infant Jesus, or at least are very near it. You must therefore begin faithfully to imitate Him, and study attentively the dispositions with which He went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pasch, in order to be filled with His spirit when you are engaged in the Holy solemnities of the Church. I might tell you that that solemn step of the Divine Child presents a touching analogy with your own situation, and a most admirable model. Since the Jewish Pasch was a figure of the Christian Easter, the participation of the Child Jesus in that legal Pasch, now first noticed by the Evangelist, prefigures the first participation of the children of the Church in the Holy Eucharist. Does it not recall to your mind, your first communion, the greatest and happiest act of your early life? But this digression takes you from the subject of the present meditation: however it presented too touching a reflection for your piety to be suffered to pass unnoticed.

I am obliged frequently to remind you, dear child, that the Infant Jesus was different from other children; in whom knowledge and judg

ment form and develop only in proportion to their age, in order that you may never lose sight of the fact, that age and wisdom being in Him from His Incarnation, all His proceedings and actions, whether He speaks, keeps silence, acts of His own accord, or obeys His parents' will, are ever-fruitful sources of instruction for us; revealing to us the most sublime virtues, and urging us to imitate them. Thus, doubtless, from the first moment of His entrance into the world, He was holily impatient *to be about His Father's business*, but, in order to do it, as it were more naturally, He waited until He had reached the age of twelve years, at which time all children begin to be capable of solid reasoning and deep reflection. He went then to the Temple, and consecrated that proceeding by those exterior and ulterior dispositions with which you must yourself endeavor to be penetrated, when you enter a Church to perform your religious duties.

Those of your age often go thither because they are led by others; which is an obedience which merits almost nothing, since it is not given voluntarily and from motives of faith and love: they go there from custom, and without reflection; and though they fully believe Jesus Christ to be present in the tabernacle, and they kneel down and recite

some form of prayer, as if to adore Him, they give way to such dissipation, and have so absent an air, that, far from profiting by the recollection of their neighbors, they frequently disturb them; they go without preparation up to the very foot of the altar of the God of holiness, power, and love; they have apparently no truly Christian sentiment; they know not how to weep over their sins, to expose their hearts, nor to express their gratitude. Hereafter, dear child, when you enter the holy place, think upon the heavenly dispositions of the Infant Jesus going up toward the temple between Mary and Joseph, and understand that you can never be recollected if you carry dissipation with you; when you are there, picture to yourself the Holy Child, as it were, at your side in the attitude of supplication and adoration; that will not be mere fancy, since He is really in the tabernacle, the worthy object of your worship; but if you pray by Him, because He is your mediator, pray like Him, because He is your model: never leave His presence without having given Him some gift, offered him some sacrifice. I need not tell you, dear child, that both gift and sacrifice are contained within your heart—pride, vanity, and idleness constitute the latter, and piety, gentleness, and humility the former.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the Spirit which guided Him while in the Temple at Jerusalem.

THE CHILD.—Divine Saviour! it is then decreed that I am to find my condemnation in Your whole conduct.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, it is a sure sign that you are entering on the way of truth, when you begin to be displeasing to yourself.

THE CHILD.—How could it be otherwise, Most Adorable Saviour! when I see myself so completely different from You who are my model? I have never before reflected upon my behavior in Your holy house.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, the weaknesses which escape from the frailty of youth are soon forgotten by me when they are sincerely repented of.

THE CHILD.—O my Good Master, but can I ever forget my irreverence in the holy places during my early childhood? Can I ever keep sufficiently, even those of later years?

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, you can prevent their recurrence by seeking to remove the cause thereof, and by avoiding all dangerous occasions.

THE CHILD.—But, my charitable Redeemer!

those causes are indestructible, since they originate in my miserable nature, and in my weak and frivolous character, and the accomplishment of my duties themselves, expose me to those very occasions.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child, man has no fault which he cannot correct by his own efforts aided by my grace; but he must labor to do so with a sincere and persevering heart. Begin by avoiding dissipation, and when you set out to go to church, occupy yourself with some pious thought, and endeavor not to cast your eyes upon the different objects you meet with on your way thither.

THE CHILD.—But, dearest Lord! even with all those precautions, I dare not hope to attain to a spirit of recollection.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Thus disposed, say to yourself on entering the church: Behold the sanctuary of my Sovereign Creator, of the Judge of the living and the dead! How terrible is this place! shall I dare to encounter its formidable majesty? Whilst respectfully taking that holy water which is to purify you, beg God to blot out the shameful spots upon your soul: kneel down with the feeling of a criminal who seeks pardon for his crimes, and then, raising your eyes toward the tabernacle, reflect that the God of love resides therein. When you

once become fully accustomed to those practices, faith and piety will banish all thoughts of dissipation from your heart.

PRACTICE.

Observe recollection when going to church.

PRAYER.

How sad it would be for me, O my God! if I were to make an occasion of sin out of a means of salvation, and if I found my condemnation in the very asylum of grace and mercy. Do not permit it, dearest Jesus! prostrate my soul with holy fear on approaching Your sanctuary, and temper it with filial confidence, in order that, recognizing my God and Saviour within the tabernacle, I may enter His abode with piety and leave it with His blessing. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

The Greek church has always been in the habit of consecrating in such kind of bread as we daily eat; and if, after having communicated the people, any particles remained in the ciboriums, they were given to children chosen from among the most virtuous. It happened one day, at Constantinople, that the child of a Jew, a glass-maker, presented

himself among the rest. This having kept him for some time in the church, he returned home later than usual, and his father asking him the reason of his delay, he said he had been in the church of the Christians, and there had eaten some of the bread they gave to children. These words irritated the Jew so much, that, taking his child, he immediately cast him into the glass furnace, which was lighted, and shut the door of it. His mother not seeing her son at home, sought everywhere about for him: and after a great deal of pains to no purpose, she returned home in deep desolation and affliction. At the end of three days, not being able to comfort herself for the loss of her child, and being near the door of the glass furnace, she called her son by his name, and immediately he answered her out of the furnace where he was. She ran to open the door, full of hope and fear, and beheld her son coming from the midst of the flames without being the least touched by them. She asked him what had preserved him from the fire? He answered that a lady clothed in purple had often visited him, extinguishing the fire with water she threw upon it, and bringing him something to eat whenever he wanted it. The mother, moved at this miracle, demanded baptism for herself and her son; but the father remaining

obstinate was hanged, by order of the Emperor Justinian, as a murderer.

Although this event appears extraordinary, it is attested by too many historians to be doubted. St. Gregory of Tours, Nicephorus and Baronnius mention it.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXI. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus remains in Jerusalem.

You have perhaps, dear child, sometimes found the church office too long, and through love of play or some other frivolous reason common to your age, longed to leave the Holy Sanctuary. The child Jesus, whose blessed soul was, however, never separated from His Father, presents to your consideration in that respect, in one of the most wonderful mysteries of His Infancy, a most admirable lesson. His fervor was not satisfied with the days, during which He could pray in the Temple by the side of His parents. He wished to pay God a special tribute of homage and adoration: it is to that love for the house of prayer, of which

His adorable life will furnish you later such striking examples, that I now call your attention, and not to the mysterious action of the Infant God, an act which nothing could justify in you; not even the most praiseworthy intention, nor the most lively devotion and piety. You will, however, soon perceive that that step by which He began the great work for which He came into the world, could not be an object for your imitation.

This remarkable occurrence of His earliest years, has naturally given rise to numerous questions, and although we should always be disposed to believe in all simplicity the Gospel accounts, the church does not forbid us to examine nor even to adopt for our own consolation those explanations which have been given by interpreters and Doctors approved by herself. Firstly, how could Jesus escape from Mary and Joseph? How could He remain in Jerusalem unknown to His parents? Secondly, where did He dwell during those three days of absence? Finally, what was His occupation? Who provided for His wants? In what did He employ Himself? Once more, dear child, do not examine into those difficulties merely through profane curiosity, but with true religious interest, and only seek knowledge in order to increase your gratitude and love.

The Fathers of the Church, in presenting their opinions upon the various circumstances of that mystery, agree in recognizing something supernatural in it which it has not pleased the Holy Ghost to reveal to us. Upon the first question of how the Child Jesus could escape from the tender solicitude of Mary and Joseph, they give two different explanations. They tell us that in the Temple at Jerusalem, the custom was, to seat the men on one side and the women on the other: the same order was observed in going out, especially at the greater solemnities. They furthermore add, that the children went indiscriminately, either with father or mother, or with any relative whom they met. If you join to their reasoning, that the charms of the child Jesus were so pleasing to men that all would seek His society, without recourse to supernatural means you can easily conceive, that neither Mary nor Joseph had any other thought, than that He was in some of the companies of travellers and with some one of their family. So that, Jerusalem being only one day's journey from Nazareth, they did not perceive their loss until the evening of the first day; the second was passed in seeking for Him, and they did not find the Divine Child until the third. Others think that as during the course of His evangelical preaching Jesus

Christ sometimes made Himself invisible to the eyes of his enemies, in order to escape their snares, so in order to try the faith of Mary and Joseph, He disappeared from them without their perceiving it. But where did He pass those three days, and what was His occupation? The general opinion is, that He remained in the Temple engaged in prayer, adoration and other sublime acts of piety. But who provided for his wants? That, the Holy Scripture does not tell us. But one of the sweetest of Saints addresses himself to the Child Jesus Himself, in order to satisfy his devotion. And in order that you, dear child, may comprehend that such questions should come from the heart rather than the mind, and have in view rather the enlightenment of piety than the satisfaction of curiosity, I cannot do better than to transcribe the very words of St. Bernard: "Lord," he says, "who furnished you with food; and took care of you during those three days?" And he thus answers himself: "Ah, doubtless in order to conform yourself in all things to our poverty, you mixed among the poor, like one of themselves, begging your bread from door to door. Grant me the grace, he adds, of partaking of that bread bestowed upon you by charity, of nourishing myself with the remnants of that delicious food."

This meditation, dear child, has already exceeded the bounds which we have prescribed to ourselves; and yet I am sure the interest of the subject will cause you to regret its termination. I will not end it, however, without making you observe that no word in the Gospel narrative throws the slightest suspicion upon the vigilance of St. Joseph in that circumstance, and it would be impious to hazard a doubt upon that of the Blessed Virgin. Their adorable child wished to prove their love by so severe a trial, and to teach us that if He is so easily lost sight of by those whose hearts are loving, watchful and pure, how much greater danger there is for those who have the misfortune to grow cold and indifferent to His presence.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the Sorrow which His Loss in the Temple caused his Parents.

The Child.—My Divine Saviour! it is too true that the time which I spend in Your holy abode seems sometimes very long to me.

The Infant Jesus.—Remember often, dear child, that if duty leads you thither, love awaits you there, in order to overwhelm you with benefits.

The Child.—O my God! if I only approach

Your sanctuary with coldness of heart, it is that I have constantly lost You, not innocently like Mary and Joseph, but by my own fault.

THE INFANT JESUS.—To whatever cause you may attribute that loss, dear child, I reside in my tabernacle solely to give you the means to repair it. You also will find me in the Temple.

THE CHILD.—O Amiable Jesus! The mere thought of losing You oppresses my heart. However, I have frequently lost You and am still exposed to that danger.

THE INFANT JESUS.—No, my child, you will not lose me if you sincerely desire to be faithful to me. I never escape from such hearts as are watchful to detain me; or if, to try their constancy, I deprive them momentarily of the sweetness of my presence, I treat them as I have treated my greatest Saints, and am even then nearer to them than before.

THE CHILD.—O my God, my Supreme Good! Since You have drawn me unto You, and wish me to belong to You, at any cost, have mercy upon me; and if by my infidelity I again displease You, punish me according to Your justice, but do not drive me from Your presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

PRACTICE.

Fear, above all things, the loss of grace.

PRAYER.

Let me never have the misfortune to lose You, O Divine Saviour! nothing could compensate for so great a loss! Not all the wealth of this world could indemnify me for it, since in losing You I lose peace, hope, and joy, and instead of invoking You unceasingly as my benefactor and Father, I should henceforth see in You only a severe Judge and an implacable Avenger. Deprive me of every thing if my salvation requires it; but leave me Jesus, through time and for eternity. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

We read in the life of St. Antony, the solitary, written by St. Athanasius, Patriarch of Alexandria, that he, having retired and hid himself in a sepulchre, that he might have no commerce with the world, was assailed there by devils under the most hideous forms. They went so far as to treat him with cruelty, and beat him so violently, that he lay almost dead. Antony, when he came to himself, implored the assistance of heaven; and immediately he saw the top of the

building in which he was, open, and a ray of heavenly light break in upon him. At the same time he was delivered from all his pains and, filled with confidence, he cried out: "Where wast Thou, my Lord and my Master? Why wast Thou not here from the beginning of my conflict to assuage my pains?" A voice answered: "Antony, I was here the whole time; I stood by thee, and beheld thy combat, and because thou hast manfully withstood thy enemies, I will always protect thee, and will render thy name famous throughout the earth." At these words, the Saint arose to pray again, and acknowledged that God had made him much stronger than he was before.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXII. OF JANUARY.

The Child Jesus found in the Temple.

HAVE you, dear child, formed any idea of the overwhelming sorrow of Mary and Joseph? Have you pictured to yourself the great uneasiness they must have felt at the loss of the Infant Jesus? You may conjecture the many times that St. Joseph reproached himself with his carelessness

with regard to that sacred charge. For as sinners are always ready to excuse themselves of the sins of which they are guilty, so the Saints and just persons easily accuse themselves of faults which they have never committed. Do you see him with breaking heart and tearful eyes walking through all the streets and public places, inquiring from house to house, and not finding Him either among their kinsfolks or acquaintances, returning with Mary, on the road toward Jerusalem seeking Him! What a sad journey, for those celestial spouses. What sighs, tears and prayers! What an admirable interchange of pure affections and holy thoughts! Jesus, by leaving them, wishes to show us how He can be lost. Mary and Joseph, by their conduct on the occasion, show us how He may be found.

After three days of journeying, affliction and fatigue, they at last reach Jerusalem, and go up to the Temple. It is there only that the Divine Child was to be restored to their persevering love in seeking Him. Judge of their surprise, as well as admiration, when they perceived Him *sitting in the midst of the Doctors, hearing them and asking them questions, and saw that all that heard Him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers.* Lose nothing of this. Behold Him seated among the Doctors, as being a Doctor Himself, and born

to teach, and yet we do not learn that He gave, as in later years, regular instructions. He listened to, and questioned those men who were looked upon as Masters in Israel; He interrogated them, if we may be allowed to say it, like a child who sought knowledge.

Therefore it is said that he listened to and questioned in His turn those Doctors who questioned Him, and admired His answers as those of a modest, gentle, and well instructed child, feeling meanwhile, as was but just, His apparent superiority to those of his age; so much so that they permitted Him to sit among them. Admire, dear child, the wisdom with which Jesus directs all events, how He suffers some little spark of His Divinity to show itself, yet without entirely losing the characteristics of childhood; admire also the prudence, not only beyond His years, but beyond man's judgment, with which Jesus acts. He asks that upon which He is not ignorant, in order to teach us that we can never humble ourselves sufficiently, nor place our opinion below that of others; and also that we are never to pride ourselves upon our science, learning nor talents.

"Go then to the Temple, Christian children," concludes the great Bishop from whom I have borrowed almost all the foregoing account, "go

consult the Doctors of the Law; question them and answer them; recognize in that mystery the commencement of the catechism of the Christian Schools. And you, Christian parents, when the Child Jesus did not disdain to question, to answer, and to listen, how can you prevent your children from attending catechism and parochial instruction?"

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon His Conduct whilst in the midst of the Doctors.

THE CHILD.—Dear Lord! How I love to contemplate You, thus beginning at the early age of twelve, that office of Doctor of the Law, which was afterward to be so profitable to your church!

THE INFANT JESUS.—You should be still more astonished, dear child, at the silence with which I listened, and the respect with which I put my questions!

THE CHILD.—That is what I do not understand, Dearest Saviour, since You had commenced Your evangelical career, and You also were seated in the midst of the Doctors like their master.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Thus, O child of Adam! do you judge of divine things by human ideas. Do you not see that I came above all, to present examples and lessons to the eyes of men. By my

prudent answers, I reminded the Doctors of the Law that wisdom is the gift of the Holy Ghost, who, when He pleases, bestows it upon childhood; and I taught children, by my silence, that modesty casts over the young a charm which wins all hearts.

THE CHILD. — But, O my Divine Master! would not those men have been more impressed by Your teachings if You had revealed to them Your divine character.

THE INFANT JESUS.—All my actions were arranged for me by my Father, and I was only permitted to unveil progressively to men that light, the sudden brightness of which their weak eyes could never have sustained.

THE CHILD.—O my Saviour! how little profit I derive from your teachings! You know all things, and yet You sought instruction. I know nothing and still am not willing to study, and frequently deem myself more learned than those who have the care of my education. O Jesus! do not expel me from Your school. Teach me to cherish the study of religion, to listen with docility to the priests of Your Church, and to treasure up carefully their holy lessons.

PRACTICE.

Listen respectfully to the teachings of the priests of God's Church.

PRAYER.

Divine Child, as admirable in the manifestation of Your wisdom, as in the humility of Your silence, and who, being a child, were yet the Master of the Doctors, and being the only true teacher deigned to receive instruction like a child, teach me when to keep silence, and when to speak. But, above all, whilst your ministers sound the Divine truths in my ears, cause them to reach my heart, in order that they may direct me in all my ways. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

We read in the lives of the Fathers of the desert, that a young girl named Paesia, having become very rich by the death of her parents, employed a great portion of her wealth in assisting the solitaries of Egypt. But her charity did not continue long, for the criminal friendships which she contracted soon extinguished in her the love of piety, and plunged her into the greatest irregularities. The solitaries, sensibly afflicted for the loss of this soul, induced one of their number, named John, to

go to her. When this holy man came near Paesia, he only said to her, "What has Jesus done to you, that you have abandoned Him?" She was immediately struck, and looking at the saint, she saw him in tears. "Why do you weep?" said she to him. "Alas!" answered he, "must I not weep, seeing the power Satan has over you?" "Do you think," continued she, "that there is any hope of salvation for me?" "I am sure of it," he replied; follow me." She immediately followed him, without leaving any orders concerning her house, so much was she occupied with her salvation. Night having arrived, John made a heap of sand like a pillow, and told Paesia to lie upon it. After some hours, he was surprised to see a ray of light descending upon Paesia. He approached her body and found she was dead. Whilst he glorified God, he heard a voice, which said to him, that the hour's penance of this sinner had been more agreeable to God than that of many others, which although much longer was not so excellent.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXIII. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus returns to Nazareth.

We come now, dear child, to the most impenetrable of all the mysteries of the Incarnate Word. It seemed, at first, that the only Son of God, in becoming man, had descended to the lowest degree of humiliation by that prodigious abasement of His majesty. But, no, the obscurity of His life during the space of thirty years in that humble house at Nazareth, is as an abyss wherein the human mind is confounded and lost. If the Eternal Word did lower Himself so far as to unite His Divine to our human nature, He abased Himself as a God, that is to say, He operated that union by a miracle of His power: He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of a Virgin. If He humbled Himself so to weep in a manger, the angels celebrated His birth in the skies; a miraculous star was sent to announce it in the East, from whence kings hastened to do Him homage. But at Nazareth, an uninterrupted silence; a cloud which the smallest ray of light cannot penetrate; a state of continual poverty, weakness, and dependence, baf-

fles all calculations, and fills the soul with a mixture of fear and admiration. However, since it was for our instruction and salvation that Jesus Christ performed all His wonders, we should endeavor to collect the important lessons which He gave us during His hidden life in the house of Nazareth.

It was the will of His Heavenly Father, that Jesus should give an example of the wisdom with which He was filled, and which He came to spread abroad, in the midst of the assembly of the doctors in the temple. After having, as it were, escaped from home, in order to do His Divine Father's work, He returned to His usual conduct to wards His parents, namely, obedience. The evangelist tells us that, *He went down with them* TO *Nazareth;* and it may, perhaps, have been said in a spiritual sense. For when He once entered, by His Incarnation, upon the road of humiliation, whatever step He might take He always descended in a more or less sensible manner. Thus in the present circumstance, after having momentarily pierced the mysterious cloud under which He had until then been hidden, He hastened to re-enter its veil, and offered no further subject of wonder, to the admiration of His parents, than that of His obedience; and all that the evangelists can tell us of His wisdom, knowledge, holiness, and power,

are reduced to these words: *And He was subject to them.*

And do you know in what that hidden God was constantly obedient to His creatures? Ah, dear child, do not picture to yourself noble objects, nor imagine extraordinary circumstances; no, no; He obeyed in the meanest services, in the practice of a mechanical profession. He did not handle a skilful pencil. He preferred an humbler trade, and one more useful to others. He did not wield a learned pen, and write beautiful manuscripts. He labored to gain His bread by more painful means. Tradition still preserves the accounts of ancient authors who speak of the ploughs which He made being still remembered during the first ages of the Church; and it was for that reason that when He began to preach in His own country, at the commencement of His evangelical ministry, men said: *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?* He says of Himself that, *He came to serve.* And He began by serving His parents. Pass over in your mind, dear child, all the cares and employments requisite for a poor family, and doubt not that Jesus always sought those which were the most painful and humiliating. Could He have found a better hiding-place for His divinity, than in the exercise of the duties of so ordinary a life?

Colloquy with the Child Jesus upon His hidden life at Nazareth.

THE CHILD.—Divine Saviour, why did You conceal the wonders of the first thirty years of Your life, from our admiration and gratitude?

THE INFANT JESUS.—My dear child, pride is man's greatest wound; and I came to cure it, especially by means of my example; therefore to his disorderly love for rank and show, I sought to oppose the marvel of my thirty years of humiliation, silence and obscurity.

THE CHILD.—But at least, O hidden God! might not the Evangelists have related to us the prodigies of perfection which you unveiled to the eyes of Mary and Joseph.

THE INFANT JESUS.—What could they offer to man of a more instructive nature, than the spectacle of a God becoming obedient to His creatures in expiation of their revolt against God!

THE CHILD.—My Divine Master! permit me to represent to you, that a life so poor, so humble, so laborious, was rather calculated to deter faithful souls from following your examples, than to attract them.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Because a sick man repulses the only remedy which can cure him, should

the physician yield to his fatal opposition. Man's dislike for humiliation is a still further proof of the need he had of such an example.

THE CHILD.—How can I ever imitate it and conquer my repugnance to obedience, obscurity and labor?

THE INFANT JESUS.—You can do it, dear child, with the aid of my grace, by frequently meditating on my hidden life. Remember that it was to insure your repose, that I labored, to render obedience easy to you, that I became submissive, to obtain glory for you, that I humbled myself, and whatever now costs you dear will then become sweet and easy to you.

PRACTICE.

Learn to practise humility.

PRAYER.

Divine Jesus, who, in the obscurity of the holy house of Nazareth, offered to Heaven and earth the spectacle of the most sublime virtues, stifle in my heart that desire to be remarked, which possesses it, that opposition to obedience which raises it against the will of its superiors, and that idleness which renders application to labor insupportable to it. May I learn from the example of Your hidden life to sanctify all my actions by faith, and

seeking only to please You here below, may I merit to contemplate You in glory above. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

During an invasion of the Lombards into France and Italy, some soldiers travelling through the country near Nice, discovered an old tower falling in ruins. They entered it, and were astonished to find there a hermit named Hospicius. They at first took him for a malefactor, condemned to live in that tower; and were confirmed in their opinion when the saint told them he was guilty of the greatest crimes. At these words, one of the soldiers lifted up his sword to cut off his head; but St. Hospicius having invoked the name of Jesus, the arm of the soldier became benumbed and motionless. Struck at that prodigy, his comrades entreated the Saint to tell them what they should do to cure the man. But he, making the sign of the cross, restored animation to his arm. The soldier, astonished at the miracle, and acknowledging the sanctity of St. Hospicius, would not leave him. He bade farewell to his companions, renounced the profession of arms and the hopes of fortune, and joined the Saint in his retirement. You can find this account in the lives of the Holy Fathers of the West.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXIV. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus increases in wisdom, age, and grace.

SINCE the Holy Ghost inspired the Evangelist St. Luke, to tell us twice in the same chapter that the child Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and in grace with God and man, it was doubtless His design that we should pay special attention to that growth, and that, if we have begun to comprehend what it was in the Saviour's person, we should endeavor to realize what it should be in ourselves. You have not forgotten, dear child, that fundamental truth, that Jesus Christ, from the first moment of his incarnation possessed within Himself all wisdom and sanctity: you remember that upon His entrance into the world, He offered Himself to God, to accomplish His Holy will; and that He was called from His birth the Wise Man, the Counsellor, the Author of Peace. Thus, when the Evangelist repeats that He advanced in wisdom, he wishes us to understand that that wisdom and grace, whose fulness was within Him, by a wise dispensation of Providence, should show themselves as it were gradually, by means of words and

actions which found favor both with God and men. What I wish you particularly to notice to-day, and to keep carefully in your heart, is, that the advancement of the Child Jesus is a model for your own conduct, and that you also should increase in wisdom and age, and in grace with God and men.

You perhaps have secretly thought, dear child, that it is useless for me to tell you to advance in age, since that is only a work of time, which never fails in its accomplishment. I answer you that the Evangelist probably knew that as well as you do, and that when he repeats twice in the same chapter that the Child Jesus *advanced in age*, he points out to us some important lesson for our spiritual advancement, some truth less easily perceived than the inevitable increase of years. He gives us to understand that as all things were in perfect harmony in the person of the Divine Child, both the increase of years and the progressive manifestation of wisdom, the development of His bodily strength and that of the gifts of grace, so should it be with the Christian child; that is to say, that in proportion as his body grows and disengages itself from the natural weakness of infancy, his soul should elevate and strengthen itself, and whilst preserving candor and simplicity should increase in wisdom and prudence.

But the thought of the sacred writer contains a still more touching consideration for you, dear child: what did Religion propose to herself in engaging you in the devotion of the month of the Holy Childhood? what was your own motive in following its practices? was it not to give birth in your soul to the Child Jesus? was it not with that view that you studied to acquire the knowledge of Him, and to penetrate yourself with the spirit of His virtues, by the contemplation of His adorable mysteries? Now that I hope He has really taken birth in your heart, He must grow and increase therein, that is, He must produce those holy affections, and interior acts of which He is the sole object and witness, and of which good and edifying behavior, and works of piety and charity, are the external fruits. Thanks to His goodness, those habits of lying, of disobedience, of idleness and sensuality, those desires contrary to innocence, no longer exist, to threaten, like Herod of old, the life of the Divine Child within your soul: yes, Herod is dead; but fear lest some one of his race survives; some unperceived or disguised affection for old weaknesses; some little passion which may slay the new-born Jesus. Like St. Joseph, fear the slightest appearance of danger. Oh! if your divine Saviour could find

in your soul similar faith, piety, and loving adorations to those with which He was unceasingly surrounded in His obscure retreat of Nazareth, He would abide therein, and would cause you to advance in all manner of virtues. Address yourself with filial confidence to Mary and Joseph, in order to learn from them the secret of keeping Jesus ever with you; and they will obtain for you the grace of so doing.

Colloquy with the Child Jesus, upon the necessity of advancing in His love.

THE CHILD.—My Divine Saviour, I sincerely hope that, in Your mercy, You have deigned to take birth in my heart. But alas! you have found there all the poverty and nakedness of the manger at Bethlehem.

THE INFANT JESUS.—I entered into your heart in order to soften it and to adorn it with all virtues.

THE CHILD.—Why, then, O my Saviour! does it remain so indifferent toward Your love? why has it only some ineffectual desires to offer You; in place of virtuous actions?

THE INFANT JESUS.—The reason is, my child, that my love grows but slowly in your heart: and it is not profitable for you to see clearly the progress which my grace makes in your soul.

THE CHILD.—Divine master! what must I do, in order that it may increase and strengthen?

THE INFANT JESUS.—Think often upon the life which I led at Nazareth. It contains instruction for all ages; but to none in a more direct manner than to those of childhood and youth, since it was entirely passed in the exercise of obedience, labor, and prayer.

THE CHILD.—My dearest Lord! it seems to me, that I am well disposed to imitate it, or rather to embrace its spirit, and study its virtues, the more so, as the duties it imposes are the same to which You deigned to submit.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child! if you wish me to live within your soul, and to cause you to increase in my love, labor to expiate your sins, pray in union with my Holy Spirit, and obey your parents and teachers, in order to honor my obedience.

PRACTICE.

Perform all your actions with great purity of intention.

PRAYER.

Divine Jesus, You are my last end as You were my first beginning; I should refer every thing to You, since my whole being belongs to You; do not permit me henceforward to lose the fruit of my la-

bors, of my obedience, nor of my sacrifices, by neglecting to consecrate them to You; grant on the contrary, that whatever I may do or suffer, I may have nothing else in view than the imitation of Your divine examples, and may glorify You, for permitting me to share in the merits and rewards of Your virtues.

EXAMPLE.

It is related of St. Remigius, Bishop of Rheims, that foreseeing a year of scarcity, he made a large provision of corn, for the sake of feeding his people. For this action the holy man was ridiculed and reviled, by some who used to say over their cups, "What means this old man, this jubilee priest? (for he had then been a priest for fifty years.) Does he wish to found a new city?" A mob was collected, and inflamed by these leaders; they set fire to the bishop's graneries, which were all consumed when the holy man arrived at the spot: What then do you think did he say and do? He alighted from his horse, and as it was the winter season, he approached as near as he could to the fire, as if to warm himself, saying, "A hearth is always good, especially for an old man." That was all the vengeance he took.

MEDITATION.

FOR THE XXV. OF JANUARY.

The Infant Jesus unceasingly attracts the Christian soul.

Was I not right, dear child, in telling you as I did, in the beginning of this *month*, that the mysteries of the Holy Childhood of the Saviour, a feature of which was presented to your daily consideration, far from fatiguing you, would prove a sweet recreation! what could be better calculated to charm pure hearts and innocent minds, than the instructive and varied picture of the early years of the most beautiful and amiable of the children of men? How powerful an allurement, for a Christian child, is the contemplation of his Creator, reduced to the state of infancy, and weeping in His manger, or smilingly receiving his homage! what more certain to bring forth piety, holiness, the sweetest sentiments, and the most sublime virtues, in the soul! Oh! my child, I know, but too well, that the colors have often been tame, and the painter far below his subject; yet these sketches, feeble as they are, have given you some idea of it, and something seems to say to me that the Holy Ghost has finished it in your heart; and that your life will henceforth be a true copy of it.

But to accomplish that end, dear child, your interest in the mysteries of the Holy Childhood must not finish with the month which you have consecrated to their honor. If, as I love to believe, the Divine unction with which they are filled has penetrated into your soul, you will experience the need of frequently meditating upon them. We are never satisfied with merely once inhaling the agreeable odor of a bouquet which has been given to us. After our return from a journey, especially if it has been through a beautiful part of the country, we never forget the scenery we have witnessed; we delight to describe its beauties to those who have not seen them, and to reproduce them upon cloth or paper, if we can either draw or paint. Often, even in solitude and silence, we retrace in thought the places we have visited, and in these mental excursions we find indescribable pleasure. Thus it should be with those consoling mysteries with which your piety has been occupied during the past month. The celestial gifts of the Child Jesus should, as it were, embalm your soul; and the remembrance of all that you have seen in Bethlehem, at Jerusalem, at Nazareth, and wherever you have followed Him, should often carry you thither in spirit. His Blessed Mother gives you that example.

"Mary," says the Evangelist, "*kept all these words*, and," he adds, "*pondering them in her heart.*" This second reflection of the sacred writer points out a most important obligation.

The fruit of your pious practices, dear child, should not be confined to a mere knowledge of, nor a barren admiration for them. You must implant in your heart the love of those mysteries, whose meditation has so delighted your mind; for this reason, because the sublime examples which they have presented to you, and the sentiments with which they have inspired you, should become the rule of your conduct and affections; and that you should reproduce and copy, when the occasion presents itself, the virtues not only of the divine Child, but also of all those holy personages who were admitted to a participation in His mysteries. Having fixed your attention upon a different subject, during each day of the past month, you can only have formed in your mind, if I may so say, a rough sketch of them. However, it is not merely some general features which you are to reproduce in your life, but a living image of the Child Jesus. Think of the care and attention required when you seek to imitate, I do not say the expression and physiognomy, but merely the features of a face given you to copy. How often

you turn your eyes upon your model, comparing, measuring, and studying more and more closely, what you have seen and examined perhaps a hundred times before. Yet what is needed to render your copy exact? Attention and accuracy, so in order to reproduce the Holy Childhood of Jesus in your life; to show yourself hereafter, in all your actions, another Jesus Christ, you need constant labor, frequent meditation, and continual study of that admirable model! Take then the resolution to revive, from time to time, your faith and love in Jesus Christ, by the consideration of some one of the mysteries of His adorable childhood, and whilst awaiting the return of the month consecrated to its honor, propose to yourself to labor to acquire that virtue of which you feel the greatest need.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon the mysteries of the Holy Childhood.

THE CHILD.—Yes, dear Lord! I enjoyed true consolation in the study of the mysteries of Your Holy Childhood; but after having meditated upon them for a whole month, I have only caught a glimpse of that grandeur and mercy with which they are filled.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Dear child, the longest

life would not be sufficient for that contemplation, which will form the occupation and joy of my elect throughout eternity.

THE CHILD.—Therefore, O Divine Master! I feel the need of further meditation upon them. But I fear lest, being no longer reminded of these holy mysteries by means of the meditations and practices which rendered them, as it were, present to my sight, that salutary impression may become weakened in my soul.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My child! the Church, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, has wisely distributed the great mysteries of the faith throughout the whole course of the year. She has instituted solemn festivals destined to place them successively before the eyes of her faithful children; and her desire is, that they should always keep up the spirit of them.

THE CHILD.—Such is also my desire, O my adorable Master! but I know not how to render that desire efficacious.

THE INFANT JESUS.—My dear child, without binding yourself to follow all the practices which you have followed during this past month, can you not select some one of them? What prevents you from consecrating this whole year to honoring my childhood? from renewing your con-

secration on the twenty-fifth of each month? from repeating daily, at either the end of your prayers, or during the course of the day, some invocation in its honor? or from seeking, amid all the virtues which have been indicated in the practices at the end of each meditation, that whose acquirement seems most calculated to sanctify you? Employ these simple means with perseverance, my child, and you will not only preserve the impressions of grace that you have received, but you will advance rapidly in the knowledge of my mysteries, and will increase in my love.

PRACTICE.

Meditate frequently upon the Holy Childhood.

PRAYER.

How could I have so neglected your adorable mysteries, O my Divine Saviour? so touching, so instructive, so enlightening, so consoling, as they are! Notwithstanding the faults and imperfections of all kinds with which I have to reproach myself during the course of this month, consecrated to their honor, my heart is yet open to some good desires; the voice of Your grace seems to begin to make itself heard. Do not permit, O Divine Jesus! that the germs of life which have been sown therein

by Your mercy should wither and die. Deign to warm and fertilize them by Your love, in order that I may reproduce in my conduct some features of those virtues whose perfection I have admired in Your adorable Childhood. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

We read in the life of the Blessed Benvenuta of Bojano, a Dominican nun, that whilst meditating one day upon the grief of our Lady during the Three Days' Loss, she desired to participate in that affliction, and, therefore, prayed earnestly, both to our Lord and His Mother to grant her the grace to feel in herself our Lady's sorrow. And, behold! a holy and venerable Lady appeared to her, with a beautiful and graceful Child, who began to walk about the room, keeping close to His Mother. His look and conversation inspired her with great happiness. But when she sought to touch Him he withdrew from her, and both He and His Mother suddenly disappeared. On this a vehement sorrow took possession of her soul, which continually increased, and afflicted her so deeply that she found no consolation in any thing, and it seemed as if she would die of grief. She was compelled, therefore, to beg our Lady to help her, for she could no longer endure it. At the end of three

days the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, with her Son in her arms, and said, You asked for a taste of that sorrow which I suffered in the loss of Jesus, and it is but a taste which you have had. But do not ask such things again, because your weakness could not live under such an agony of grief!

(This day's meditation closes the *Month of the Holy Childhood*, but the *time* consecrated by the Church to the honoring of its mysteries not ending until the Feast of the *Purification*, you can recite the Litany of the Infant Jesus during the intervening days, and prepare yourself for that Feast by the following meditation.)

MEDITATION.

FOR THE II. OF FEBRUARY.

The Child Jesus presented in the Temple.

In placing before you to-day, dear child, this present meditation, I invert the order in which the mystery to which it refers was accomplished, since, as it was written in the law, the Infant Jesus was taken up to Jerusalem and presented to God in the Temple, forty days after His birth, and you have

already beheld Him attain the age of twelve years. Two motives have led me to this transposition. Firstly: since the Church celebrated at a stated period, the mystery of our Saviour's Presentation in the Temple, the order which has been followed in the different subjects of the meditations could not agree with that epoch. Secondly: the Feast of the Purification being as it were the ending of the time consecrated to the mysteries of the Holy Infancy, you will find yourself in perfect harmony with the Church as to the subject which now occupies your attention, and you will terminate with it those pious practices by which you have endeavored to honor them.

The Law of Moses required that the first-born of all parents should be presented to, and consecrated to the service of God. This law appears manifestly to have been instituted in a figure of Jesus Christ, who being, as St. Paul says, *the first-born before all creatures*, was He by whom all were to be sanctified and eternally consecrated to God. You have already seen, dear child, the first act of Jesus upon entering the world was to devote and offer Himself in the place of all other doctrines of whatever nature they might be, to accomplish God's will in every manner. What He did in His Mother's womb by the dispositions of His heart,

He does to-day outwardly, by presenting Himself in the temple, and giving Himself up to God. He took that solemn step to obey the *letter* of the Law, by causing Himself to be offered by the hands of His parents, and to fulfil its *spirit* by consecrating Himself entirely and unreservedly to God.

That is not all, dear child, and what should affect us most deeply in this mystery is, that He also presented and consecrated us to His Father, as indissolubly united to His person. Thus we belong to God, by the title of His creatures, and as the work of His hands; while, by the presentation of Jesus Christ our Head, we belong to Him as members of the mystical Body of His Son, and by the donation which He made of us in His own person to whom we are incorporated by baptism. Understand well, then, dear child, that you have been given to God, consecrated to His service, and sanctified in Jesus Christ. In like manner as a vase, a building, or any other object once dedicated to the worship of God, can never more be applied to profane uses, so a Christian given to God by Jesus Christ, is obliged, unceasingly, to tend toward holiness both by his thoughts, desires, and labors; and when he turns away from that end, to attach himself to the world, or to obey his

passions, he becomes profane, and guilty of sacrilege. See then, dear child, the obligation you have contracted at the sacred font, and of which Jesus Christ made Himself the pledge in His Presentation in the Temple.

Another article of the law provided, that every mother on presenting her first-born before the altar, should offer a lamb in sacrifice at the entrance of the tabernacle, or if she could not afford that, two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, the one for a sin-offering the other for a burnt-offering. You will perhaps ask, dear child, how that law could affect the Infant Jesus, since He had no need to be redeemed, being Himself the Redeemer. Alas! he took upon and bore about within Himself the form and likeness of slaves and sinners. Mankind had been condemned to death in punishment of sin; it was really their lot to submit to it. God consented to deliver them from it by means of Jesus Christ, who died for them; and it was as a figure of the Saviour, our true victim, that animals were offered up to God. They died in some sort for Him, whilst awaiting the hour of His sacrifice. How is it that you are not confounded with astonishment, at the mere thought of the Creator and Redeemer of mankind being ransomed by a few pieces of money, and that the sacrifice of His

life had been prefigured by that of animals! how can you reflect unmoved, upon His subjection to that law of slavery, in order to free those who were subjected to it, that all might become His adopted children!

But whilst Heaven accepts that wonderful exchange, learn to appreciate by the immense value of the ransom offered for you, all the dignity of your soul, and the high esteem which you should have of the life which has been restored to you by the oblation of Jesus Christ. No, says the prince of the Apostles, you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold or silver, but by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. May the sight and remembrance of that mystery keep you ever, dear child, in holiness and innocence, and deter you from degenerating from the greatness to which your wonderful deliverance has raised you! Whilst beholding the blessed candles which the faithful carry to-day, thank God for having called you into His marvellous light: and sing the praises of the Divine Infant who is the Light of the World. Beg Him to preserve and increase in your soul the inestimable gift of faith, and implore His mercy for so many souls, who have either never yet received it, or have had the misfortune to lose it. When the priest elevates the Holy Host at Mass,

and offers It to the adoration of the faithful, unite yourself to his holy action, offer yourself with Jesus Christ to the Celestial Father, and having had the blessing of contemplating Him, beg Him fervently to close your eyes henceforth to all worldly vanities.

Colloquy with the Infant Jesus upon His Presentation in the Temple.

THE CHILD.—Divine Saviour, I did not fully understand before reading this meditation, that holiness was obligatory even for children.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Why not, dear child, since it is much easier to acquire in early years, and more precious in God's sight than at any other time of life?

THE CHILD.—But yet, dear Lord! what is a poor child? What can he do worthy to attract the looks of the Almighty?

THE INFANT JESUS.—And what, dear child, is the most powerful and skilful of men? However much his fellow-man may esteem his actions, they are only valuable in the eyes of the Just Judge according to the purity of heart and rectitude of intention which animate them; and the humble child who walks before Him in his innocence, only attentive to please him, is more the object of His

complacency than the proud man who fills the world with the report of his name.

THE CHILD.—My Divine Master! You have told me that holiness is easier attainable in youth than in later years. However, it exacts many sacrifices from it.

THE INFANT JESUS.—Yes, my child, it is easier to acquire in early years, because the duties which it imposes are less numerous and less painful. But even while giving the name of sacrifices to the renouncement of pleasures often hurtful and always frivolous, are they not softened by the contentment which accompanies them and the interior joy which follows them? Have you not yourself, dear child, experienced this fact?

THE CHILD.—It is true, dearest Lord? that the mere remembrance and consideration of Your mysteries during this past month have procured me many pure and sweet consolations.

THE INFANT JESUS.—What will it be then, dear child, when you practise the virtues which they have taught you, and when for the first recompense of your struggles and triumphs, I will bestow upon your soul a foretaste of that hidden manna which I reserve for my victorious children?

THE CHILD.—My Divine Master! I wish to belong to you forever, since your service is both

lawful and profitable. But I dread the weakness of my heart and I unceasingly implore your mercy and grace to aid me to remain ever faithful to you.

PRACTICE.

Give yourself to God, unreservedly and forever.

PRAYER.

O my God! who created me for Yourself alone, and only placed me upon this earth in order to lead me to heaven, have mercy on my weakness, strengthen my good desires, and if You preserve my life keep me also in Your grace. You know that I wish to love, to follow, and to belong to You alone. Grant, then, O Divine Jesus! that I may live only to serve You, and in dying be united to You eternally. Amen.

EXAMPLE.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the order of the Jesuits, before his conversion thought of nothing but satisfying his ardent passion for glory. At the age of twenty-nine he was besieged in the castle of Pampeluna, where, after having displayed great courage, he was wounded upon the breach. A shot from a cannon broke from the wall a bit of stone, which struck and

bruised his left leg; and the ball itself, in the rebound, broke and shivered his right leg. The garrison, seeing him fall, surrendered at discretion. The conquerors treated the prisoners well, and Ignatius was sent in a litter to the castle of Loyola, which belonged to his father. His cure being tedious and difficult, he called for some book of romances to dispel his melancholy. None such being found in the castle, the "Immolation of Christ," and the "Lives of the Saints," were brought to him. He read them, first only to pass away time, but afterward began to relish them, and to spend whole days in perusing them. He was struck at all those heroes had done to save their souls, and resolved to imitate them. His conversion was heroical, and worthy of his heart. He entirely renounced the world, and became the founder of the Society of Jesus, which has since rendered to the Church such valuable services.

LITTLE CHAPLET;

OR, CROWN OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS.

This little chaplet is composed of fifteen beads, three large ones and twelve small ones. Upon the three large beads you say three *Our Fathers*, and upon the twelve small ones, twelve *Hail Marys*. The three *Our Fathers* are designed to honor the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, whom St. Bernard calls the "Earthly Trinity;" the twelve *Hail Marys* to honor the twelve years, to which number the childhood of Jesus is generally extended. The recitation of this little chaplet is a powerful means to obtain innocence and Christian simplicity. Since it pleased God to convert the Magi by means of the weakness of infancy, and to overwhelm them with graces, you may piously hope to obtain all sorts of favors and assistance by the recital of this Chaplet.

Experience has taught, that its use is greatly efficacious in all temptations against faith and purity.

Manner of reciting the Little Chaplet, or Crown of the Infant Jesus.

After having made the sign of the Cross, and recited the three *Our Fathers*, you say: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Then recite the twelve *Hail Marys*, after which you add the following Versicles and Prayers:

V. A Child is born for us.

R. And He is full of grace and truth.

PRAYER.

Divine Infant! Incomparable Beauty, Infinite Goodness! Since You are my Saviour, I adore You, I love You. I consecrate to You all the powers of my mind, and all the tenderness of my heart; and I give You sincere thanks for having become a child through love of me. I adore You in all the mysteries of Your divine Infancy. I beseech You to give me its spirit, and to grant me the grace worthily to honor You, by the imitation of the virtues which You practised therein, in order that, uniting myself to Your holy dispositions during my life on earth, I may deserve to see and possess You eternally in Heaven. Amen.

This Chaplet should be said after the daily meditation, when possible.

BLESSED BE GOD!

HYMN FOR CHRISTMAS TIME.

Oh, come, all ye faithful!
  Triumphantly sing;
Come see in the manger
  The Angel's dread King!
To Bethlehem hasten,
  With joyful accord;
Oh, hasten! oh, hasten!
  To worship the Lord!

True Son of the Father,
  He comes from the skies;
The womb of the Virgin
  He doth not despise;
To Bethlehem hasten, etc., etc.

Hark to the Angels!
  All singing in Heaven,
"To God in the highest
  All glory be given."
To Bethlehem hasten, etc., etc.

To Thee, then, O Jesu!
  This day of Thy birth,
Be glory and honor
  Through heaven and earth!
True Godhead, Incarnate!
  Omnipotent Word!
Oh, hasten! oh, hasten!
  To worship the Lord!

MYSTERIES OF THE HOLY CHILDHOOD.

V. O God, make speed to save us.
R. O Lord, make haste to help us.
V. Glory be to the Father, etc.

Pater Noster.

THE INCARNATION.

I. Jesus, sweetest child, who from the bosom of the Father didst for our salvation come down into the womb of Mary ever Virgin, where, conceived by the Holy Ghost, Thou, the Word incarnate, didst take upon Thee the form of a servant; have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us.

Ave Maria.

THE VISITATION.

II. Jesu, sweetest Child, who in Thy Virgin Mother's womb, in her didst visit Saint Elizabeth, and fill Thy forerunner, the holy Baptist, with the Holy Ghost; sanctifying him from his mother's womb; have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

III. Jesu, sweetest Child, who, for nine months

hid in Thy Mother's womb, didst tarry for the time of Thy birth, being looked for with eager expectation by Mary and by Joseph, and by them was offered to God the Father, for the salvation of the world, have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

THE BIRTH.

IV. Jesu, sweetest Child, born in Bethlehem of Mary ever Virgin, swathed in poor rags, laid in the manger, glorified by angels, visited by shepherds; have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father Infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

V. Christ is at hand.

R. O come, let us worship.

Pater Noster.

THE CIRCUMCISION.

V. Jesu, sweetest Child, circumcised the eighth

day, called by the glorious name of Jesus, and by Thy name and by Thy Blood foreshown as the Saviour of the world, have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

VI. Jesu, sweetest Child, made known to the three Magi by a star, adored in Mary's bosom, mysteriously honored with the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh; have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

THE PRESENTATION.

VII. Jesu, sweetest Child, presented in the Temple by Mary, Virgin Mother, whom Simeon embraced with his arms, and Anna magnified with the voice of prophecy; have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

VIII. Jesu, sweetest Child, whom Herod sought to slay, whom Joseph carried with Mary into Egypt, who wast saved from death by flight, and

whom the Blood of innocents did glorify; have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

O Jesu, etc., *as above.* V. *and* R., *as above.*

Pater Noster.

THE SOJOURN IN EGYPT.

IX. Jesu, sweetest Child, who for seven years didst dwell an exile in the land of Egypt, and there didst lisp Thy first word, and take Thy first infant step when loosed from Thy swathing bands, and secretly didst work Thy first marvels by overthrowing the idols of the land; have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

THE RETURN OUT OF EGYPT.

X. Jesu, sweetest Child, who after Herod's death, wast called from out of Egypt into the land of Israel, who didst suffer many trials by the way, and wast carried back by Mary and Joseph into Nazareth; have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

HOLY LIFE.

XI. Jesu, sweetest Child, who in Thy poor house at Nazareth, didst dwell most holily, passing Thy life in obedience, poverty, and toil, and growing in wisdom, age, and grace, wast manifested to God and men; have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

DISPUTATION WITH THE DOCTORS.

XII. Jesu, sweetest Child, at twelve years' old, brought to Jerusalem, lost by Thy parents, sought with much sorrow, found with greatest joy after three days, disputing amongst the doctors in the Temple; have mercy upon us.

R. Have mercy, etc.

Ave Maria.

O Jesu, etc., *as above.*

V. The Word was made Flesh.

R. And dwelt amongst us.

Let us Pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, Lord of Heaven and earth, who dost reveal Thyself to little ones; grant us, we beseech Thee, so to honor meetly the

holy mysteries of Thy Son, the Infant Jesus, and so to follow Him humbly in our lives, that we may come to the eternal Kingdom, promised by Thee to little children. Through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Pope Pius VII., *by a decree of the* Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, *dated November* 23, 1819, *granted:*

I. The Plenary Indulgence, on the 25th of every month, to all those, who, being penitent, having confessed and communicated, should be present at any church or public oratory, in which, the above pious exercise is used, provided also they pray according to the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff.

II. The Indulgence of 300 days once a day, to those who, in private, with a contrite heart devoutly use this pious exercise.—(*From the Raccolta.*)

FINIS.

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